



**ABSTRACT**

**THE EFFECT OF THE HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE**

**ON PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS**

**OF THE MISSIONARY CHURCH**

by

Larry R. Salsburey

The twofold purpose of this study showed the extent to which the primary elements of the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) in the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies have been put into practice in the participating Missionary churches. It also sought evidence of change in the culture, beliefs, and attitudes attributed to the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies of HCI. I developed a survey and a follow-up interview to discover the degree of implementation as well as changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes of churches involved in the three initial Healthy Church Initiative strategies. The churches that became intentional about implementing the Healthy Church Initiative foundational strategies experienced noticeable change in their culture, beliefs, and attitudes leading to church health. The remaining seven HCI strategies, built on this foundation, will be the focus of future training.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ON PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS  
OF THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

presented by


Larry Richard Salsburey

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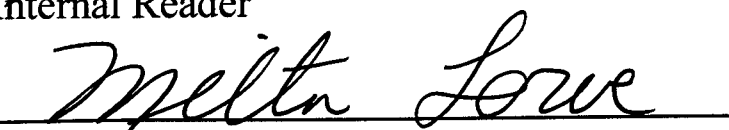
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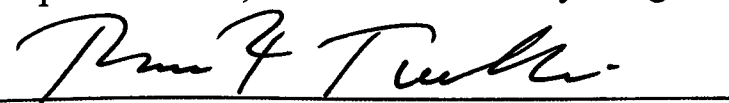
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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM

#### Introduction

In the year 2002, God began to unfold a new direction for my life. I had served fifteen years with Elkton Missionary Church, a rural congregation in the *thumb* of Michigan. During the time spent there, a new outreach center was constructed. God opened the door for the congregation to move out of an ingrown ministry into a community-minded ministry. God has since blessed the decision to build, and the congregation has moved its worship services into this multipurpose facility. However, God had other plans for me. With no opportunities on the horizon, I began to wonder what God's plan would be. God laid upon my heart the need for a nearby congregation in the largest community in the county. The church was small and struggling but had a tremendous opportunity to reach the surrounding community. The congregation had seriously discussed possibilities of closing. My one-year trial, which appeared to be a temporary assignment, turned into a blessed opportunity for seven years. Though the church is still small, several children, youth, and adults have come to Christ. Since then, I have become involved in the denomination's efforts to promote the Healthy Church Initiative. Grace Community Missionary Church has not only been a wonderful group of believers with whom to work but also a very supportive team of God's servants who have been willing to participate in efforts to regain church health.

For many years the Missionary Church has focused on church planting. In light of the estimated 190,000,000 unchurched people nationwide, starting new churches has been and will continue to be a mandate in the denomination ("Church Multiplication"). It

probably is the most important reason the Missionary Church grew by 21,468 members from 1985 to 2006; however, the decline and closing of congregations during those two decades counteracted the increases, leading to the reason for this research study.

### **Problem Stated**

The number of Missionary Church congregations has not significantly changed in the original ten districts. Dr. William Hossler, president of the Missionary Church, reports, “Most original districts are within 5 churches of where they were at some point in the last 17 years. There seems to be a point which is difficult to rise above” (“Some Observations”). In other words, the net gain after starting new churches and closing old churches in each of the original districts has not varied by more than five during the previous two decades. New districts, on the other hand, have experienced the largest increase in new churches. The Missionary Church has made efforts to revitalize congregations through the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) and Keystone discipleship training. These efforts suggest the leadership of the denomination believes training churches to develop disciples who, in turn, make other disciples is a major part of the solution. In order to reverse this trend, HCI begins with establishing prayer as the base for all ministries and promoting a healthy love environment, both within the congregation and in the surrounding community. Then a disciple-making strategy, helping congregations develop a description of a disciplined person (DDP), is part of the HCI training process.

Previous efforts to increase the number of churches in districts focused on church planting. Director of U. S. ministries of the Missionary Church Robert Ransom provides

specific information regarding Missionary Church new church plants and church closings in the following statement:

From 1997 to 2006 there were 294 [Missionary Church] church plants. The total number of churches increased from 313 to 452. *The total number of churches that closed (either a church plant that failed or an older church that closed) was 155. Eighty-four of those were failed church plants and seventy-one were older churches that closed* [emphasis mine].

These statistics reveal the positive effect of church multiplication efforts and the lingering problem of declining churches. Without intervention, even exciting church plants ultimately become declining churches.

An update in an article entitled “From My Heart” by Hossler reports 430 churches as of June 2008, reflecting a loss of several high-profile churches in the Western District, further diminishing the number of Missionary Church congregations. Certainly church planting has been an effective strategy to reach the lost for Christ while church closings and withdrawals affect the growth negatively.

Furthermore, ten thousand churches of all denominations in America disappeared in a five-year period ending in 2005 (McAdams). One hundred fifty-five of the churches closing were Missionary Churches. In the Michigan district of the Missionary Church, declining churches shrinking to less than fifteen members were closed. Then the buildings and grounds were sold and the money reinvested in planting new churches, which could become declining churches and eventually die without intentional intervention. Prior to my arrival at Grace Community, discussions ranged from whether or not we should close, to making the necessary changes in order to survive. New life can be breathed into dying congregations by following the strategy of Jesus, which is fleshed out in the Healthy Church Initiative, a revitalization strategy of the Missionary Church

denomination. Jesus' plan to propagate the growth of the church is summed up in his words to the disciples:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20, NIV)

Jesus' followers obeyed the command, propagating a disciple making movement that impacts the world today.

The Healthy Church Initiative was the most encouraging step forward for established churches in the Missionary Church denomination since the strategic move several years ago to start the Church Multiplication Training Center (CMTC), which now prepares church planters from over sixty denominations. The mission statement of CMTC states, "The Missionary Church is committed to the Great Commission vision of multiplying disciples. The multiplication of churches is an effective tool to opening the door to making more and better disciples" ("Church Multiplication").

Dan Riemenschneider developed HCI for the Missionary Church denomination to provide a plan of action based on the strategy of Jesus to help plateaued and declining churches to regain their health and to prepare healthy churches to maintain their health.

One of the ways to evaluate the effectiveness of discipleship is the public commitments made by a person who has completed a small group foundational study. For instance, two visible signs of following Jesus include obedience to the command to be baptized and a willingness to participate in communion. Another sign is when a person brings a friend to a discipleship group or begins to meet with a friend one-on-one.

Sometimes the HCI process breaks down because the light of the world, Jesus, exposes "sin in the camp," if the pastor or another leader has hidden issues

(Riemenschneider, Personal interview). Until the sin issue is resolved, progress comes to a standstill. In addition, at times pastors lose the sense of their calling. Riemenschneider states his opinion that some things cannot be taught, including “character” and “calling.” The equipping function of HCI recognizes that “skills” can be taught.

### **Purpose**

This study focused on the twofold purpose of discovering the extent to which the participating congregations implemented key elements of the HCI strategy and to observe changes in the culture, attitudes, and beliefs of Missionary Churches participating in the HCI strategy. In addition to the three key elements of the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies, seven additional strategies completed the HCI process. The participating churches had only completed the first three foundational strategies.

### **Research Questions**

With this scenario in mind, the following research questions drew out themes and patterns from existing literature and the experience of others. This study evaluated the effectiveness of the implementation of the Healthy Church Initiative strategy.

#### **Research Question #1**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the HCI prayer base model?

#### **Research Question #2**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the love environment strategy in their congregations and in their corresponding communities?

**Research Question #3**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations developed a description of a disciplined person, which translated into a life transformation discipleship strategy?

**Research Question #4**

To what degree have new healthy church practices begun to change participating Missionary Churches' culture, beliefs, and attitudes?

**Definition of Terms**

The Healthy Church Initiative begins by training pastors and task force members in the first three strategies: the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies. Riemenschneider defines the following key strategies. The first three were the focus of this study. Each coach and/or pastor, trained by the principles of HCI, led participating churches through the principles of HCI. Seven other strategies, not discussed in this study, flow from the first three foundational strategies:

**Prayer-Based Strategy—Establishing a Basis Out of Which All Else Flows**

The prayer base strategy is built on the premise that prayer, as the basis of all ministries, is foundational in establishing the necessity of the power of God and dependence on the Spirit of God.

**Love Environment Strategy—Demonstrating Love to Those Inside and Outside the Group**

The love environment strategy encompasses both the relationships within the church family and the compassion for the community, exceeding mere words with the love of Christ.



## **Discipleship Strategy—Intentionally Helping People to Follow Jesus' Walk**

The discipleship strategy seeks to produce disciples who, in turn, make disciples. The task force facilitates the process by developing a description of a disciplined person, providing a recognizable goal as well as a planning tool.

The culture, beliefs, and attitudes impacted by HCI reveal systemic changes in the way churches function in regard to prayer, love environment, and disciple making.

In order to facilitate answers to the research questions, certain methods assisted in discovering the insights learned by the participants.

### **Ministry Intervention**

A survey measured the degree of implementation of the HCI strategy in participating churches followed by an interview to discover changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes. My hypothesis was that as churches followed HCI principles, evidence of observable change in church health would emerge. The evidence was limited to the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies. The evidence in this study revealed the degree of implementation of the HCI strategies.

In regard to the prayer base, churches would experience observable change when most small groups within the congregation began to spend significant time in prayer in response to situations and circumstances, when leaders enlisted prayer partners, and when church leaders taught and modeled prayer as a way of life.

In regard to the love environment, churches would show observable progress when attitudes and actions reflected harmony in interchurch relationships and when compassion for people in the community became a way of life.

In regard to the discipleship strategy, churches would begin to move forward when the task force completed the DDP. Churches discovered the biblical standard for discipleship by completing the DDP and from that standard defined what a mature disciple should know and do.

In the Healthy Church Initiative, each church completing the DDP developed a list of practices demonstrated in the life of a growing disciple. In the Grace Community Missionary Church DDP, the expected practices became the goal of the items listed in the actions column. The actions column included the programs, small groups, and activities planned to provide the participants with opportunities to learn and develop in the areas expected of the participants. The design of the actions column allowed yearly revisions (see Appendix A).

### **Context**

Jesus' strategy for discipleship is global in its scope. The Missionary Church is a globally focused body of believers. The Keystone Project, a Missionary Church discipleship training session, has been equipping third world pastors and leaders to handle the explosive growth of the church. More recently, efforts have included pastors from the States. The Missionary Church is from a Wesleyan-Arminian theological background currently experiencing the effects of the melting pot of people becoming part of the church today.

The Missionary Church is made up of 430 congregations in the United States. This study is limited to participating churches in the Central, North Central, East Central, Northwest, and Michigan districts of the Missionary Church. For most of the years the

Missionary Church has existed, a majority of its churches were in small towns and medium-sized cities.

### **Methodology**

In order to determine whether or not HCI has accomplished the goal of teaching Missionary Churches to reproduce the life of Christ in the lives of others, this study sought to develop a two fold method to discover the effectiveness of the HCI strategy and the changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes. The design of the research was first to initiate a mixed method study of the responses to the initial three strategies of the Healthy Church Initiative.

Participants provided insights revealing the effects of following the various aspects of the strategy compared to the consequences of ignoring key elements of the strategy. Pastors provided community and church information about size, location, local culture, economic conditions and other conditions contributing to success or failure of the strategy. I used a Likert scale to measure spiritual and cultural readiness to incorporate various aspects of the strategy. The questionnaire asked churches to assess whether the results of new growth can be attributed directly to HCI or if the results were due to other reasons. One of the difficult areas of the coaching process was moving from creating a DDP to putting the DDP into action. Learning how to develop a DDP opened the door for these churches to create their own version, preferably on a chart with progressing columns. The three-page chart from Grace Community Missionary Church illustrates the process (see Appendix A). This DDP allowed task force members, led by their coaches and pastors, to move from a biblical understanding of what a disciple should look like to creating programs putting the strategy to work. Creating a description was reasonably

successful, but the difficult part was motivating the task force members to begin the process of training people to become disciples who would then disciple others. The goal of the DDP was to motivate the task force to develop an action plan. Momentum was lost in churches failing to move from a description to action.

### **Participants**

The participants of HCI included twenty-nine churches in the Michigan, Northwest, Central, East Central, and North Central districts of the Missionary Church that have participated in the Healthy Church Initiative. Fifteen of the 29 churches (52 percent) responded to the questionnaires and/or interviews. The participants in each church included the pastors, approximately six to ten task force members, and up to ten additional volunteers from the congregation.

### **Demographics**

Each pastor provided information including the size of the community within a seven-mile radius of the church, the location of the church, the ethnic mix of the congregation, population growth or decline, the local economy, and leadership change. The study also considered the primary style of worship, previous exposure to church health material, the age of the congregation, the degree of motivation for change, and the pastoral leadership style of each church.

### **Data Collection**

I developed a questionnaire with the help of original questionnaire content from Riemenschneider, the developer of HCI. The follow-up interview specifically sought evidence of changed culture, beliefs, and attitudes related to involvement in HCI. Finally, I interviewed the designer of HCI training, recording my personal observations about his

knowledge of participating churches. A pilot test was conducted among the coaches of HCI and the research reflection team to test the validity of the instrument.

### **Data Analysis**

I conducted analysis of the data, looking for emerging themes, evidence of the implementation of HCI main elements: changed culture, beliefs, and attitudes. I used a *t*-test to analyze and organize the data into charts and graphs, revealing repeating themes and trends.

### **Generalizability**

The findings of this study will be particularly helpful to all Missionary Churches having access to HCI training. I designed this study to benefit Missionary Churches that participated in the HCI Boot Camps and followed through by establishing task forces led by the local pastors and HCI trained coaches in the Missionary Church denomination. Other churches of similar backgrounds may benefit, but the findings are specific to the target group.

### **Theological Foundation**

Riemenschneider developed the theological basis for HCI from Jesus' prayer in John 17 and various New Testament passages. Jesus prayed for his disciples and every believer who would follow him in John 17:1-6, 20. HCI asks the question, "Why did Jesus come?" John 17:1-26 is the final prayer Jesus left with his disciples. This prayer revealed much about Jesus and what he wanted his disciples to know. He wanted them to realize that his plan for them included sending them out into the world the same way the Father sent Jesus into the world. In Robert Emerson Coleman's classic work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, he describes Jesus' basic approach compared to the way people think

today as “revolutionary” (23). He personally enlisted men with a “selection” plan of his own design (Coleman 25; Eims 29; Luke 6:12-13). Healthy churches involve people in Jesus’ plan to go into the world to make disciples. Discipling churches begin with a strong prayer base, a healthy love environment, and a functional discipleship strategy (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”).

The purpose of Jesus’ plan is to bring people into the kingdom of God. James and Molly Davis Scott refer to Luke 9:1-2 as the essence of Jesus’ purpose “to bring people into the Kingdom of God,” which speaks of “the need for spiritual transformation” (161).

HCI training introduces pastors and task force members to the three reasons Jesus gave as to why he came and how a disciple’s life is impacted by Jesus’ plan. The first reason was to bring *glory* to God (John 17:4; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). Jesus glorified God by completing his Father’s plan to redeem the world. Part of the church’s place in that plan is fulfilling God’s purpose for a disciple’s life (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”; Warren 19). The second reason was to give a message (John 17:1-3; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). The message is called the good news. Everlasting life is a gift Jesus came to give to those who would believe in him (Green 290). The third reason was to give a strategy (John 17:6, 20; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). The strategy of Jesus was to “make disciples who could make disciples” (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). Two thousand years ago, Jesus made disciples who made disciples, until one day Jesus’ strategy reached people in the present generation.

The responsibility to make disciples until Jesus comes again belongs to every follower of Jesus. God revealed his strategy to his Son. Jesus gave this strategy through

his Word, leaving the responsibility for disciples of all generations to put it into action (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). However, a disciple must never forget Jesus’ connection to his Father and the Holy Spirit. If any discipleship program does not have the same dependence on the Father and the Holy Spirit, it will fail. If a church has no interest in the people Jesus loves, the whole point of his strategy is missed. Jesus demanded a “radical transformation,” which leads to a life modeled by “Jesus, the heartbeat of God” (McNeal 62), who transformed disciples “for the purpose of glorifying and serving our heavenly Father” (51).

Discipleship experts emphasize the key habits of discipleship such as studying the Word, establishing an effective prayer life, becoming a steward of all God has given, fellowshiping with other believers, sharing one’s faith and other disciplines (Stetzer and Dodson 127; Eims 159-80). Some leaders of declining churches “do not know what a disciple is” (Stetzer and Dodson 128). Simply defined, “a disciple is someone who ‘walks as Jesus walked’” (1 John 2:5-6; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). God’s plan included helping new believers become disciples who know God’s purpose for their lives through the intentional ministry shared from one believer to another (Stetzer and Dodson 129; and Warren 51).

The first step of Jesus’ plan to produce disciples was through a changed mind (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). “Keep on being transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

The second step of Jesus’ plan to produce disciples was through a changed heart (Luke 18:9-14; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). Jesus wants hearts to be different. Jesus illustrated this change in heart by comparing the Pharisee and the tax

collector. God exalts persons who humble themselves instead of having an attitude of pride.

The third step of Jesus' plan to produce disciples was through a changed lifestyle (Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative"). The wise man and the foolish man have several things in common. They both built houses and experienced the storm. One thing was different. One home stood strong while the other was demolished (Matt. 7:24-27). The one heard the words of warning and obeyed. The other ignored the words of warning and did not follow through with his actions.

Knowing the Word of God is a beginning, but belief must come from the heart. More importantly, the Word must be lived out in everyday life. A person must follow the walk of Jesus. Discipleship is about "changed minds, hearts and lifestyles" (Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative"). Jesus' life demonstrated everything he taught in words, actions, and complete dependence on his Father in heaven.

### **Overview**

Chapter 2 is dedicated to an examination of the literature relating to the historical background of the Missionary Church and its theological roots, HCI strategies, system analysis, the theology of church health, as well as some of the tools available for promoting church health. The literature review identifies key terms used by HCI, examines literature pertaining to the theory and practice of discipleship and church health, explores key concepts and themes, provides support for the choice of methodology and theology, and concludes with a summary of the review.

Chapter 3 covers details of the design of the study including the research methods, data collection, and data analysis.



Chapter 4 analyzes the data and summarizes the major findings of the study.

Chapter 5 discusses on the major findings of the study, the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, the unexpected observations, and recommendations for further study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This study focused on the response of participating Missionary Churches involved in the Healthy Church Initiative. The literature review compares the Healthy Church Initiative with the top church health and growth strategies and system analyses. The theology of Jesus' strategy to multiply disciples is the basis of the theological background for this study. This study looked at all the HCI strategies with a major focus on the foundational strategies of establishing a prayer base, cultivating the love environment, and establishing a discipleship strategy. Although this study focused on these introductory elements of the Healthy Church Initiative, the review of literature includes brief treatments of the other elements of HCI in order to understand the context of the whole strategy. The remaining HCI elements include the mission-driven strategy, worship service strategy, equipping strategy, leadership multiplication strategy, effective structures, and Bible-centered ministry.

#### **Missionary Church Culture**

The Healthy Church Initiative of the Missionary Church was initiated to explore church health needs. Jesus looked for change in the culture, beliefs, attitudes, and practices of those who desired to be his disciples. This study looked for noticeable change in the culture, beliefs, attitudes, and practices of the participating congregations of the Healthy Church Initiative in the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies, leading to fully devoted disciples of Christ.

The Missionary Church culture is better understood in the context of history. Missionary Church history provides background information to understand the target churches. The decline of several Missionary Churches led to the establishment of HCI. I was personally involved in the HCI training while pastoring a declining church. These reasons led to my interest in this research.

### **The Impact of History on Missionary Church Culture**

The Missionary Church of today has some very interesting roots in the Anabaptist Reformation of 1525-1536. The church today traces its history from two separate denominations. The United Missionary Church merged with the Missionary Church Association in 1969. Both branches of the church had Mennonite ancestry. However, the Wesleyan and Keswickian Holiness groups were influential in shaping the new beliefs that ultimately caused the churches to depart from their Mennonite heritage. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, while revival was spreading across America, a restless spirit existed in several American Mennonite congregations (Engbrecht 1).

Dr. Dennis D. Engbrecht points out the “emphasis on the deeper life, that of entire sanctification, healing services, unsanctioned prayer meetings [desire to have a prayer meeting without needing permission from a bishop], baptism by immersion, a strong emphasis on the eminent return of Christ” among teachings accepted by several ministers who visited Wesleyan revival meetings:

The teachings and writings of A. B. Simpson, F. B. Meyer, R. A. Torrey, Andrew Murray (all Keswickian), Joseph H. Smith, C. W. Ruth, Phoebe Palmer and J. A. Wood (all Wesleyan) had significant influence on the early leaders of the Missionary Church. (3-4)

Many pastors were removed from their pastorates for teaching these doctrines that were contrary to Mennonite beliefs.

Timothy Paul Erdle, Missionary Church archivist, says the *Missionary Church Constitution* is understandable only in light of the practices of “believer’s baptism, rigorous discipleship marked by holy lifestyles purified and empowered by the Holy Spirit, radical biblicism, a strong sense of Christian community, sacrificial missionary outreach, an abhorrence of war, and the separation of church and state,” which are taken from their Anabaptist roots (3). Today’s Missionary Church has a mixture of people from a variety of backgrounds, many having no knowledge of the Anabaptist Mennonite heritage. The Missionary Church began with a movement of God known as the holiness movement, and many new churches were started in the early years. Today, Missionary Church leaders have a renewed desire to see the Spirit of God move upon the Missionary Church again.

### **The Impact of the Healthy Church Initiative on Missionary Church Culture**

The Healthy Church Initiative appeals to the *rigorous discipleship* of Missionary Church heritage without the separatist restraints that kept many newcomers away. Even today, many find the strong requirements for membership to be a roadblock to their inclusion. The nonsmoking, non-abuse of alcohol, and other restrictions can make some people shy away. The Missionary Church does not apologize for maintaining a strong standard of conduct for membership; however, the emphasis of discipleship must be on lives transformed by Christ, not on keeping a list of requirements. Church planting has opened the door to many people who have no background in the Missionary Church. New Missionary Churches often use the name *Community* or similar term instead of

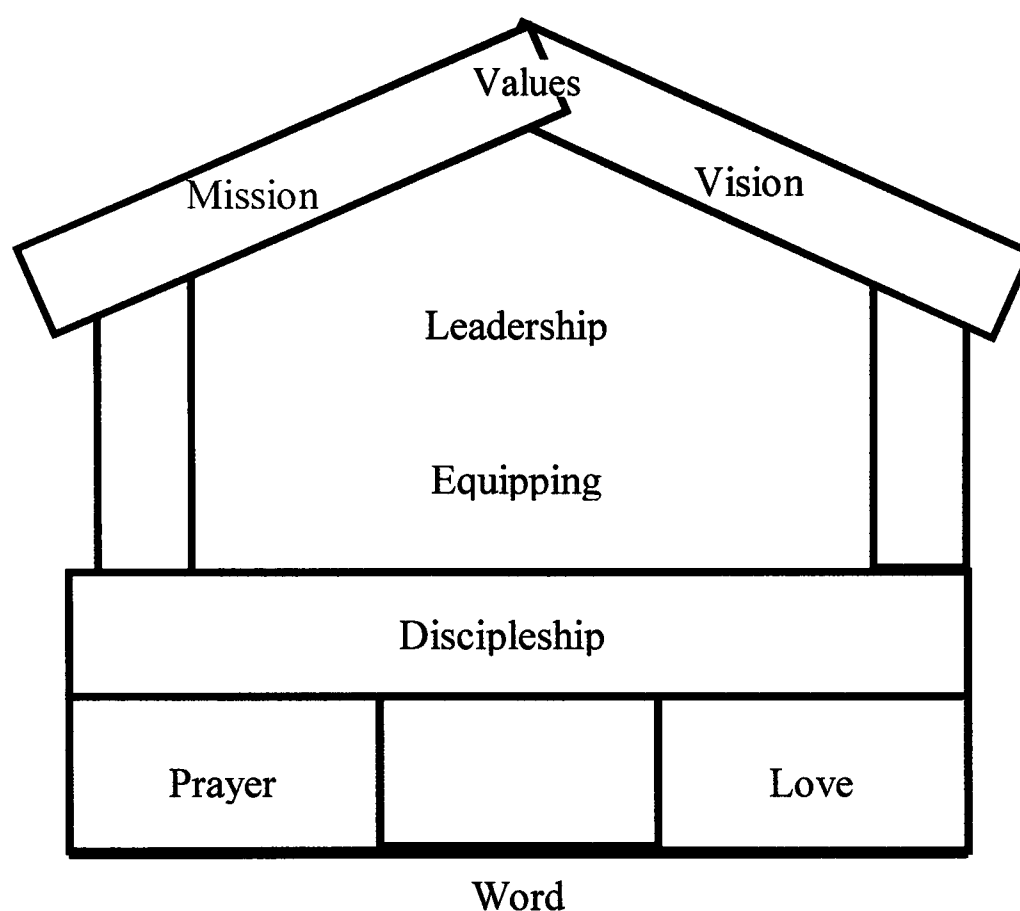
Missionary in their titles. The distinctiveness of the Missionary Church Wesleyan theology is difficult to maintain in this environment.

In spite of starting many new churches over the last several years, the overall growth of the denomination has been diminished because so many churches have been closed. Ultimately, new churches become declining churches unless intervention is intentional and effective. Riemenschneider started directing the Healthy Church Initiative in June 2003. Preliminary coaches' training began in the fall of 2003. Boot Camp started in 2004.

In a personal interview with Riemenschneider, I asked what has been learned regarding the churches that have successfully completed the HCI training process compared to those that have not. One of the most crucial factors observed by Riemenschneider reveals that successful churches are "desperate before God for turnaround to happen." Riemenschneider believes now, more than ever, that the HCI principles are exactly what the church needs today. Riemenschneider said with confidence, "There is no question about the validity of the strategy because it was Jesus' strategy." One thing successful turnaround churches experience is the inclusion of "key influencers" on the HCI task force. When the task force members are not "key influencers," their lack of influence becomes apparent with the need for real significant change. The process of disciple making is a major change for declining churches. The pastors of the successful churches are those who understand how to "change the church without blowing it up" (Personal interview).

One of the hazards of any training session is when suggestions or examples given are literally taken to be requirements. Future training may need to emphasize the need to

modify ideas when necessary. Churches always need to adapt what they learn at HCI to fit their own situation. The prayer base strategy encourages churches to get as many groups as possible praying for lost people; however, churches should not think they have not established an effective prayer base simply because it does not duplicate every aspect of HCI. The purpose of the prayer base strategy was designed primarily to help believers develop a compassion for the lost. Jesus' approach was to challenge disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers (Luke 10:2). Whether people pray for lost people or pray the Lord of the Harvest to send for laborers, the church cannot grow unless prayer is the basis for everything else they do. The HCI process is illustrated by a diagram of a building. A healthy church is built on the foundation of the Word with the two main supporting foundation blocks of prayer and love. Discipleship is built on this solid foundation resting on these indispensable components of prayer and love. A healthy church is impossible to build if the entire structure is not based on God's Word and built on the strong foundation of prayer and love. When people are doing things without prayer, the result is the product of human effort. When people do not love each other in the church they are not able to have compassion for the lost people of the community. People without prayer and compassion for the lost will not make new disciples (see Figure 2.1).



Source: (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”)

**Figure 2.1. The HCI process.**

The HCI strategy boils down to three basic areas. Riemenschneider developed a diagram to illustrate the transitions (see Figure 2.2). In regard to leadership, to be effective, leaders, transitions, and disciple-making strategies have to function together to produce the desired outcome of disciples making disciples. Where one or more of those circles break down, the process will not work. First, some churches fail to follow the strategy correctly. Second, many congregations cannot handle transitions. Third, churches lacking a strategy will not show evidence of intentional efforts to make reproducing disciples.



Source: Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative."

**Figure 2.2. Disciples making disciples.**

The purpose of Figure 2.3 is to expand on the connections completed when the circles in Figure 2.2, "leaders, transitions, and disciple-making strategies," are functioning properly.



### To God

- ❖ Worship
- ❖ Spiritual disciplines (drawing near to God).
- ❖ Fruit of the Spirit
- ❖ Giving (of ourselves, our time, our talents, our money)

### To each other

- ❖ Living out “one another’s”
- ❖ Being in community—Life Transformation Group (study, experiences, encouragement to change minds, hearts, behavior)

### To the world

- ❖ Investing time in pre-Christians
- ❖ Compassion (being the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus)

### To ministry

- ❖ Calling of God (passion, spiritual gifts, personality)
- ❖ Learning to be a disciple maker

Source: Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative.”

### **Figure 2.3. Connecting.**

Key HCI principles are gleaned from the life of Jesus. The first principle is discipleship through modeling (John 13:12-17; Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). Modeling is so important in the discipleship process. Jesus challenged teachers with the reminder that a student is limited to the teacher’s level of maturity (vs. 16). Jesus modeled an appropriate godly lifestyle to thousands of people he was not personally discipling, but as a mentor he also modeled compassion and an effective prayer life to his disciples.

Jesus enabled his disciples by living the kind of life he wanted them to live and ultimately the kind of life he wanted all believers to live. He taught them to love others by caring for them. When they inquired why Jesus did certain things, he gave them honest answers. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner note that “the leader’s behavior

provided the evidence” (28). Jesus expected them to do for others what he was doing for them (McNeal 62).

The second principle is discipleship through mentoring (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”; John 21:15-17). One of the most memorable incidents of mentoring is found in the Gospel of John when Jesus spent special time alone with Peter, helping him understand the calling Jesus had in mind for his life, that of feeding his sheep.

As a mentor, Barnabas considered a relationship with Paul to be worth the time and effort to support his assimilation into discipleship (Hendricks and Hendricks 61; Acts 9:26-27). When others were afraid of Paul because of his previous persecution of the Church, Barnabas stood on Paul’s behalf to help him make the transition from persecutor to evangelist.

The third principle is discipleship through teaching (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”; Matt. 5:1). The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most memorable examples of Jesus teaching his disciples how to live. One of the important aspects of discipleship in the New Testament church was to expose young believers to biblical truth and doctrine in a small group (Biehl 29; Patton 82).

The fourth principle is discipleship through coaching (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”; Matt. 10:5-7). Coaching is working with a group or individual to help him or her live out what the coach is modeling, teaching, and mentoring. Coaching is accomplished by bringing the best out of a disciple by helping him or her discover personal strengths and challenging his or her “actions and attitudes” (McNeal 61).

Howard and William Hendricks conclude that Barnabas was a mentor who “was engaging in a ministry of multiplication” (130). Barnabas invested in the life of Paul, and his influence reached multiple generations. The church will move forward only as Christians invest in the lives of others for the purpose of reproducing new life in Christ in the lives of others. Jesus intended for this strategy to be passed on from one generation to another (Ford 16).

Part of the support system for HCI is the E3 (encourage, equip, and empower) pastors’ groups. Most of the districts have only recently begun formation of E3 groups. These groups provide the missing element of accountability necessary after the HCI process is turned over to the senior pastors. When churches are left to continue the process on their own, sometimes they begin to revert to the old ways. For now, the coaching process has been put on hold until these E3 accountability groups are put in place and pastors are provided the needed support. North Central District has had the most experience with these pastor support groups and their success has served as a model for the other districts. The national HCI team is comprised of five district superintendents and other people who have helped formulate what is done in the HCI process. Another piece of the puzzle is to provide mentoring for pastors who lack the needed skills (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”).

I attended early presentations of the Healthy Church Initiative, but I became fully involved when I attended the HCI Boot Camp in the fall of 2005. The Boot Camp was followed by HCI intensive in the fall of 2006 and HCI intensive 2 in the spring of 2007. I was trained as an HCI coach and ultimately became the coach of another congregation

while taking our own church through the process with the help of Michigan District Church Health Director Stan Liechty.

### **The Impact of John Wesley on Missionary Church Culture**

John Wesley made an important contribution to church health and discipleship in the early history of the Missionary Church. Wesley wrote his thoughts on exercising graces and improving gifts, revealing his plan for a healthy church. His select bands were the small group ministries of his day (*Letters*). Wesley wrote a letter to Vincent Perronet:

My design was, not only to direct them how to press after perfection, to exercise their every grace and improve every talent they had received, and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other, but also to have a select company to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions without reserve, and whom I could propose to all their brethren as a pattern of love, of holiness, and of good works. (304)

His words had set a standard for progress, a goal for improvement, and a process of accountability and encouragement. Wesley's letter provided his agenda for discipleship.

### **The Impact of E3 Pastors' Groups on Missionary Church Culture**

E3 pastors' groups were formed in recent years to facilitate a process for encouragement and accountability for pastors leading the HCI process in local churches. Two resources are being used to enhance the E3 pastor's groups. The first is *Comeback Churches* by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodsens and the second is *Simple Church* by Thomas S. Rainer and Eric Geiger. These resources provide help in establishing the needed changes for church health, a focus for putting a discipleship strategy into action, and accountability for the pastors who continue HCI after the coaching segment is over.

Stetzer and Dodsens' work is the result of research involving three hundred plus churches across the country. Rainer has a similar study called *Breakout Churches* about churches having a long history of decline followed by a breakout from decline and that

then began to experience “at least 26 conversions annually since its breakout year” (20). Rainer received data from a large number of churches but was only able to find “thirteen churches” meeting their “strict criteria” (22).

Stetzer and Dodsen’s results reflect only the findings of the participating churches. These churches had a comeback from decline and were growing “through conversion as measured by increasing attendance and a decreasing membership to baptism ratio” (xii). People were actually coming to faith in Christ from an unchurched status instead of moving members from one church to another, and the baptisms were no longer just from members of church families. The purpose of the study was “to undergird and inform” and to “inspire and guide” through the accumulated “experiences” of both the authors and their respondents (xii). The study reveals emerging themes from all of these comeback churches. Unlike some studies focusing on the leaders, Stetzer and Dodsen focused on the congregation as well (30). Also included is the process of evaluation to see why the church is in its current condition (28). Comeback churches “see the harvest” (40), as Jesus so aptly described the situation (Matt. 9:38), and pray “regularly and passionately” for God to provide the harvesters (40). I know a farmer who took a drive past his fields every Sunday after church to view the crops. Some people thought he was obsessive, but if he would have been viewing the harvest of lost people, Jesus would have called him obedient. One of the keys to growing healthy churches, as portrayed by Stetzer and Dodsen, is to be intentional about making plans for every aspect of ministry (44) and to possess a “clear and compelling vision” (45).

An interesting difference in Rainer’s findings reveals that the pastor leading at the time of a breakout “was not leading by the sheer force of a charismatic personality”

(Rainer 25). These churches were not quick to adopt “new methodologies” or the “hottest trends” (25). Another interesting phenomenon was the lack of dependence on a “clearly articulated vision statement” (25).

Rainer and Geiger go in a totally different direction from most of the strategies based on a “church model” (3). The authors’ intent is to provide a “simple process of discipleship,” based on Scripture, which is also the intent of HCI. HCI is not a program but an instrument to help a local church put its ministry model into action. The definition of “[a] simple church is a congregation designed around a straight-forward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth” (60). Simple church leaders have a grasp on the concept that spiritual growth is like “redecorating.” Once a homeowner occupies a house, the process never ends. The Spirit takes up residence immediately when a person receives Christ as Savior and begins the lifelong renovation (60).

Churches that are simple are not conformed to this world because the world is complicated. Rainer and Geiger believe people are looking for simplicity in their spiritual journey. They give several examples from secular life where people are responding to simplicity in the world of electronics with devices such as the iPod with a single button (8). Another example of the simplistic trend is an online women’s magazine catching my wife’s attention called *Quick and Simple*. Church leaders, however, tend to create complicated programs to solve problems, which actually create problems for people seeking a simple lifestyle. Simple church ministry has the vision to find a way to move people firstly to love God, secondly to love people, and thirdly to serve the world. The vision to love God, love people, and serve the world is implemented by learning to love

God through worship, learning to love others by building relationships through small groups, and serving the world. This vision is accomplished by either volunteering to minister to others within the church or getting involved in opportunities to serve the community (Rainer and Geiger 15).

If today's culture is overwhelmed with the complexity of life and church leaders do not respond to the need in the culture for simplicity, churches will continue to stagnate and decline. Though simplicity is necessary, Rainer and Geiger remind leaders simplicity is not "easy" and is "extremely challenging" (16). This simple church philosophy is not just a way of doing things; it aligns the ministry to do discipleship the way God designed it.

Both of these books reveal the purpose of the E3 pastors' groups to develop competence and accountability in the pastoral leadership process, which is crucial to the HCI strategy. It also gives to them tools that help accomplish the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

To grasp the urgency of the need for intervention in the declining health among Missionary Churches, turnaround or comeback churches provide important information to understand the nationwide problem and give new hope for a solid recovery.

### **North American Culture and Church Decline**

Church decline is widespread in the United States and is caused by a variety of reasons. Research in recent years provides evidence of the scope of the problem and reveals several reasons for the decline.

## Scope of the Problem

In “Back from the Brink,” John C. LaRue, Jr., vice president of research and development at Christianity Today International, invites “churches that have witnessed a turnaround in attendance, finances, purpose, and/or spirit to participate.” In 2005, *Leadership Journal* looked at thirty-one churches that had experienced amazing reversals of decline in the decade preceding 2005. On average, these congregations doubled their attendance from the low nineties to the low one-eighties (LaRue “Back From the Brink-Characteristics”). Some of the congregations made better than expected progress in less than one year. Following are some interesting statistics reflecting the main reasons for the change.

## Reasons for Decline

Among the reasons for churches declining in size or staying the same size in Leadership’s research was “[d]isastrous conflict, moral failure, spiritual depression, or simply long, slow decline” (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”). The article reports that churches do bounce back from these situations and gives several case studies to support the findings. According to LaRue, 85 percent of United States churches, or nearly 340,000 have reached this stagnation in growth. The study sought to determine the leadership skills, planning, and spiritual intervention to see a turnaround. Churches can be restored to health. “For many turnaround leaders, the first step is helping the congregation admit there is a problem” (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”). One of the interesting results was that “pastor and parishioner have different views on the cause” (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”). When pastors thought loss of vision was the primary problem, parishioners thought an aging congregation was the primary



problem. “Pastors were more likely to cite the foundational causes.... In general, parishioners focused on the symptoms rather than the causes” (LaRue-“Back From the Brink, Leadership”); see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Turnaround Leaders Focused on Causes, Not Symptoms**

<b>What Signaled Need for Change?</b>	<b>Pastors %</b>	<b>Parishioners %</b>
Loss of vision	65	39
Low morale, apathy, or spiritual depression	62	26
No meaningful impact on community	59	35
Plateaued or declining attendance	56	39
Low attendance	56	34
Aging congregation	33	50

Source: LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”

Successful turnaround pastors did not rely on their own expertise, but relied on the help from “outside resources” (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”). The attitude of the congregation towards change was a key reason for a successful turnaround; however, resistance seemed to come more often from the church board (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2. Interesting Facts about Turnaround Churches**

FACT	%
Pastors looked to outside resources to help initiate or stimulate the turnaround.	85
Turnaround churches had widespread congregational support soon after initiating their plans.	95
Pastors reported that the church board was the number one source of resistance to the turnaround plan.	42

Source: LaRue, “Back from the Brink-Leadership”

Many pastors develop strategies based on their perception of what people think. Congregations showing motivation to change expressed surprising opinions:

[The study revealed] 75 percent of churches reporting “spiritual initiatives” as important to addressing the problems. “Education of the congregation,” “changes in worship style,” “new mission statements,” and a variety of new ministries were cited by more than half of all respondents, but it was the spiritual initiatives that excited most people. (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”)

The data provides evidence that turnaround congregations have their priorities in the right place (see Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3 Changes Made to Initiate the Turnaround**

%	Changes
75	Spiritual initiatives (prayer, etc.)
65	Congregational education via sermons, classes etc.
59	Change worship style
56	Change vision statement
52	Change the church leadership structure

Source: LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership.”

My own experience at a previous church proved the need for widespread congregational support. Thirteen years of trying to move forward with a planned building project finally moved forward when obstacles blocking the vision to reach the community were no longer in the picture. Now with the internal obstacles removed and church health restored, the church today is experiencing growth.

### **Characteristics of a Healthy Congregation**

William H. Day, Jr. compared the definitions of several well-known church growth and health strategists. The goal was to complete a comprehensive definition incorporating the best of all ideas.

Day concludes, “While numerous authors have written about church health, there has been little effort by these writers to interact with each other’s ideas or to develop a comprehensive definition of church health” (2). In his quest to discover a comprehensive definition, he looked at the works of Donald McGavran, Win Arn, C. Peter Wagner, Dann Spader, Gary Mayes, Leith Anderson, Rick Warren, Christian A. Schwarz, Mark Dever, and Steven A. Macchia.

Day bases his comprehensive definition of church health on his presuppositions that the Bible must be the source of the main characteristics of church health (27).

Although Day acknowledges important ideas from nonbiblical sources, he maintains that the definition must have its foundation in Scripture. Beyond the biblical basis, two important characteristics provide an acceptable definition. “The definition must be broad enough to be comprehensive, but narrow enough to be focused” (27).

After developing categories gleaned from all of his review of literature and listing the various categories, Day began looking at the important aspects of all the various

definitions that helped focus the elements of his comprehensive definition. Day included visionary leaders who led a church in “relating to its context,” along with “good organization, commitment, and functional balance” in the criteria leading to church health (28). Day’s final definition stated in his conclusion was as follows:

A healthy church is a church that seeks to obey the Great Commission and Great Commandments in its setting by being biblically based, spiritually dynamic, mission focused, servant led, and characterized by excellence in all that it does. (30)

Church health is easier to define than it is to maintain. Obedience is the key. The subsequent ingredients in Day’s composite definition flow from the Great Commission and the Great Commandment when people take God’s word seriously.

Scott B. McKee defines church health “as the balance among or ‘harmonious interplay’ between the quality characteristics of health. Lack of health is defined as a low presence or absence of the health characteristics” (5). Having all the characteristics of health is not enough if the characteristics are out of balance, according to McKee. McKee bases his health characteristics on the Beeson Church Health Characteristics, including “empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, authentic community, functional structures, transforming discipleship, engaging worship, intentional evangelism, and mobilized laity” (5). Many of these characteristics parallel those of the Healthy Church Initiative. David Michael Cady’s research built upon the work of McKee, and others, who developed the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire, by adding a new focus on the effect of leadership on church health (74). Cady presupposed that “healthy churches are growing churches” (78). McKee, however, discovered an interesting phenomenon: “some healthy churches experiencing decline and some unhealthy churches experiencing growth” (103). These situations do exist but are not the usual pattern (103). James A.

Harnish compares church health to heart health based on his personal experience with heart disease. Much heart disease is the result of personal “benign neglect,” the inference being that churches also suffer health problems because of neglect (41).

Knowing the definition of church health is very important, but the elements must be based on good theology. God’s Word is the only reliable resource for this purpose.

### **The Place of HCI in the North American Church Growth, Church Health, and Missional Church Discussion**

Prior to the church health discussions, “[i]n 1973 Donald Anderson McGavran, and Win Arn addressed the subject of church health in their book *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth*” (Day 2). In recent years, authors of dissertations at Asbury Theological Seminary explored the relationship between church health and church growth and discovered a positive relationship between the two (e.g., McKee). Cady focused on visionary leadership and the necessity of the revitalization of existing congregations (6).

Darrell L. Guder, focusing on “North American culture,” looks for “fresh ways in which the gospel gives us resources for a confident witness to Jesus Christ,” and helps churches in North America “in developing ‘new forms of mission-shaped churches’” (8). His purpose is to reveal the “possible shape of missional ecclesiology,” bringing a missions focus to the continent (8). Alan Hirsch maintains the “system” inherited from the established church has “marginalized” the “apostle,” “prophet,” and “evangelist” functions that are necessary for a congregation to be missional in its focus (34). The shepherd and teacher functions have been maintained, but all five functions are needed for a church to experience “peak performance” (34). Hirsch mentions Wesley as an

example of a missional leader and notes the fact that basically the established church has allowed parachurch organizations to carry out these roles (34). The five functions have led to the acronym APEST, which stands for “apostle,” “prophet,” “evangelist,” “shepherd,” and “teacher” (35).

In the progression from church growth, to church health, to missional church, HCI is most assuredly part of the church health emphasis, with some elements leaning toward missional church.

### **Comparing Healthy Church Initiative to Church Health and Growth Strategies**

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 compare the basic tenets of the HCI strategy with other church health experts. Church health experts have many approaches to church health and growth strategies. Prayer is one of the key foundation blocks for Riemenschneider and a top priority for Jeff Patton (52). Riemenschneider’s love environment includes relationships within the church and also the church’s care and concern for the community. Rick Warren emphasizes a parallel to the love environment with the word fellowship in *The Purpose Driven Church*, and Michael Slaughter and Warren Bird emphasize relationship over ideology (Warren 119; Slaughter and Bird 78). Christian A. Schwarz discovered loving relationships as a common trait among healthy growing churches, and Ron Crandall refers to the loving relationships as “loving atmosphere” (*Turnaround Strategies* 3). The HCI discipleship strategy leading up to “changed minds, hearts, and behavior” has similar elements to Patton’s growth groups and Warren’s discipleship Maturity (Patton 82; Warren 107). Slaughter and Bird’s emphasis on discipleship differs with a focus on mentoring (99). HCI includes in the mission-driven strategy the areas of vision and values with the “ministries and meeting agendas” guided by the mission statement

(Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). Paul D. Borden describes mission as the “bottom-line purpose for which an organization exists” (64). For Warren, mission is “communicating God’s purpose through evangelism” (107). From the leadership standpoint, Crandall discovers that pastors who move their churches from vision to mission reveal three of the same traits. Their vision for the church is personal. They help others dream what could happen and move them to a common vision, having a strategy for moving a church to be “purpose-driven” (*Turnaround Strategies* 112). The choice of terminology, such as “vision, purpose, mission, legacy, dream, goal, calling, or personal agenda,” does not define the greatness of a leader (Kouzes and Posner 17). Great leaders see the possibilities, and they have the desire to make a significant contribution that others have not yet accomplished.

The HCI worship strategy includes “intentionally moving people towards intimacy with God” (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). The strategy encompasses the worship team engaging people in worship and facilitating worship. Even though worship goes far beyond Sunday morning, HCI focuses on every aspect of the worship hour from arts and music to the preaching of the Word. Warren takes a different approach using *Magnify* to describe the celebration of God’s presence (07). Patton focuses on “indigenous worship” fitting the culture of the area (71). Because Borden’s emphasis is on leadership rather than the elements of worship, his focus is on dealing with those who would seek to derail the changes necessary for growth, including the changes needed to reach potential new worshipers. Slaughter and Bird’s focus for emerging churches is on “quality over quantity” (74). They expect the laity to be very much involved in planning worship that fits their culture. Schwarz notes growing

churches all have “inspiring worship” (30). Rather than taking one church as a model, Schwarz takes the common characteristics of many congregations and finds principles that can apply in most situations. The mistake most churches make in trying to adopt the worship style of a particular church is that they do not take into account whether or not the style of worship will work in their own “context” (30). For instance, a seeker-sensitive service such as those found at Willow Creek may be a very good method for some but does not necessarily qualify as “church growth principle” (30). Figures 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate these comparisons.



**Table 2.4. Church Health and Growth Strategies**

<b>Riemenschneider</b>	<b>Patton</b>	<b>Borden</b>	<b>Barna (on Turnaround Leaders)</b>	<b>Barna (Strategies for Growth)</b>	<b>Warren Purpose Driven Church</b>
Prayer base	Prayer	Accountability	Team builder	Sensitive to past but focus on future	
Love environment		Leadership	Provides vision	Spiritual depth modeled	Fellowship membership
Mission driven	Clear mission	Organize for mission	Grows spiritually	Do a few things in excellence	
Worship	Indigenous worship		Encourager	Return to basics	Worship magnify
Discipleship	Growth groups		Strategic thinker	Let people enjoy some success	Discipleship maturity
Equipping		Restoring congregation to rightful place	Takes risks	Running start then build momentum	Service ministry
Outreach			Workaholism	Emphasis on people not programs	Outreach mission
Leadership multiplication	Lay pastoring	Discovering gold (new leaders)	Spiritual commitment	Personal relationships	
Effective structures	Membership that means something		Strong Personality	Never let up	
Bible centered			Potential Visionary		

**Source:** Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative; Patton; Borden; Barna, *Turnaround Churches*; Warren.

**Table 2.5 More Church Health and Growth Strategies**

<b>Slaughter and Bird (Emerging Church)</b>	<b>Schwarz (Natural Church Development)</b>	<b>Crandall (Turnaround Strategies)</b>	<b>Collier</b>	<b>Day</b>
Quality over quantity Health over size Meaning over activity	Empowering leadership Gift-oriented ministry Passionate spirituality	Congregational confidence Concern for unreached Proactive, effective pastoral leadership	Create a niche Focus on children Know who you are	Relating to Context Spiritually empowered Committed to Great Commission and Great Commandment
Relationship over ideology Discipleship requires mentoring Leaders as trainer coaches Lifestyle like Jesus	Functional structures Inspiring worship Holistic small groups Need-oriented evangelism	Loving atmosphere Clarify personal vision Clear, shared vision Work, pray for spiritual renewal	Know who you are not Preaching that connected Free stuff draws a crowd Master one thing	Biblically based Visionary leaders Functionally balanced Organized to accomplish mission
Lay-based movement	Loving relationships	Quality preaching, inspirational worship Effort to reach new people Emphasize prayer Develop new programs Plan to take risks and take them	Patience with unholy Development Outward eyes Membership has responsibilities Collaborative pastoring	

Source: Slaughter and Bird; Schwarz; Crandall, *Turnaround Strategies*; Collier; Day.

## Theology of Church Health

John Edmund Kaiser uses the analogy of comparing the church to a “public corporation.” The difference, of course, is that no human being can claim ownership to the church (52). Kaiser cites Colossians 1:18, which reads, “And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” When church leaders proceed with the task of formulating a mission statement, they must take it directly from Jesus’ mission because Jesus is the head of the church. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 gives Jesus’ command to make disciples:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

All importance is placed on Jesus’ authority and the source of his authority. As Kaiser submits, Christ is the one “who owns the Church” and Colossians 1:18 proves this assumption (52). According to Kaiser’s exegesis, the phrase “make disciples” is the “main verb” and the “other three verbs appear in the form of participles in support of the main verb” (53).

Manfred W. Kohl’s insight complements Kaiser’s assumption by connecting the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to today’s generation. Kohl states, “Jesus our Lord gave clear instructions that we are to do ministry in two specific ways, namely baptizing and by teaching” (113). In addition to baptizing, which focuses on preaching the good news of salvation, the “teaching focuses the core values established by Christ; helping his followers—his body, the church—to reflect his likeness, a process described

through theological terms by the word sanctification” (113). The church must understand and put into practice the core values of Christ, focusing on the rest of the great commission including the words “to obey” not mentioned by Kohl (Matt. 28:18-20). The clarity of God’s purpose for sending his only Son is evident.

Kohl explains his concern by saying, “I have chosen this passage, known as the ‘Great Commission,’ because I have discovered that in many churches it has become more the ‘Great Omission’” (113). Kohl’s comments reinforce the supposition that true multiplication of disciples is not being accomplished.

Kohl asserts getting back to the example of Jesus who spent his time mentoring “twelve full time students [disciples]” as well as several “who were just auditing the course” (115-16). As a mentor/teacher, Jesus lived what he believed in the presence of his disciples, expecting changes in the lives of his disciples. Throughout the church, people should be moving to “connect to God” through worship, to “connect with others” through small groups, and to “connect with the world” through service (Rainer and Geiger 94-95).

John J. Vincent makes the connection to others and the world more practical by asking, “What might happen, we wonder, to a movement of Jesus in the streets, with communities of followers and supporters, repeating his deeds, and lifestyle, and making new friends, and campaigns ‘out there?’” (330). Vincent’s comments imply that the movement is not happening, and people would be surprised if it actually happened. Intentional steps must be taken to equip believers to lead others through the discipleship process.

Every church mission statement must take into consideration the fact that Jesus’ main mission was for the church to make disciples, and everything else, whether

“baptism” or “teaching,” flows from this mandate. Kaiser states, “The theological significance of the construction is that the core of Jesus’ command is to produce new, committed followers from the raw material of the nations, i.e. people of every ethnicity” (54). The strategy of Jesus depends on the commitment of faithful followers in every nation. Every ministry of the church should flow from the mission of Jesus.

The role of the Holy Spirit in ministry is evident in the Missionary Church constitution:

Article IV. A. 1. d. We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son, is one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternally God. His office and work is to reprove or convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; to regenerate those who repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; to sanctify, empower, teach, guide, and comfort the believer. The Scriptures reveal the work of the Holy Spirit in the church to be that of uniting believers into the body of Christ, possessing it as the temple of God, equipping it with gifts and graces for service, giving it the body of inspired truth and imparting to it the spirit of illumination and guidance into all truth, and presiding over and guiding the church into the will of God. (*Constitution and Bylaws*)

The role of the Holy Spirit, however, in the HCI house diagram is not apparent. A pillar labeled “The Holy Spirit’s Direction” could be incorporated into the HCI house diagram to highlight the importance of a Spirit-directed ministry.

Crandall emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in turnaround churches. The church is a “creation of God empowered by the Holy Spirit” (*Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 2). The book of Acts provides biblical support for pastoral vision in relation to the direction of the Spirit (24).

The Spirit enables Christians to “sense they have a part in extending the abundant and new life brought by Jesus Christ” ultimately producing “fully committed Christian disciples” (Crandall, *Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 24).

The HCI strategy should not be mistaken as a to do list that, if followed, produces church health. The heritage of the Missionary Church fully acknowledges that the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to church ministry, “equipping it with gifts and graces for service” (*Constitution*). Indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit surpasses human wisdom and empowers ministry beyond human comprehension. Effective pastoral leadership is demonstrated by praying for the power of the Holy Spirit to “come and heal the broken and reclaim the lost” (Crandall, *Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 52). A Spirit-directed congregation is always going to be reaching out to broken and lost people. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, Paul writes, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.” The Spirit’s influence is important throughout the history of the church (65). The heritage of the Missionary Church began with the Spirit’s influence in the lives of people such as J. E. Ramseyer and Daniel Brenneman (Lageer 9, 16).

Crandall, in answer to his own question regarding the need to turn “survival focused fears into excitement about reaching out to others,” suggests that “[in] the first place, turning toward the Spirit, recovering grace, and imparting new vision need to be underway” (*Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 68).

Martha Grace Reese challenges people in the congregation to pray for “people in your life who have no one to pray for them” and then wait to “see what ideas the Spirit gives you” (112) Praying for lost people connects the church to the Holy Spirit.

Reese also challenges pastors to “be willing to listen to the Spirit so that you can be used by Christ” (111). Real faith, enhanced by God-given tools, gifts, and talents, are

“utilized in a choreographed-by-the-Spirit life” (106). A higher number of adults were being baptized in mainline churches where the majority of people inviting and sharing were long-term members not new converts (114).

If church health largely depends on disciple making and if the expansion of Jesus’ kingdom must have a worldwide focus, then the Healthy Church Initiative has a missional element in its core values. The job of church leaders is to train congregations to live up to the name Missionary Church, both locally and worldwide.

### **Literature Supporting Healthy Church Initiative Principles**

The Healthy Church initiative includes several strategies. Many church health and growth strategies offer insights helpful in the quest for enhancing the effectiveness of HCI.

#### **Prayer-Based Strategy**

Church health and growth strategies have many approaches. Prayer is one of the key building blocks for Riemenschneider in the HCI strategies. Prayer is essential to spiritual growth in effective churches (Crandall, *Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 23; Hunter 43; Patton 52; Schwarz 26; Slaughter and Bird 156). Prayer is the communication link to the power of God and without it churches and individuals operate on their own without any results of eternal value.

Alvin Vandergriend provides Grace Community with a resource to disciple people in *The Joy of Prayer*. One of the key elements of the prayer-based strategy of HCI supported by Vandergriend is the need to pray for lost people because Jesus had a compassion for the lost and told his disciples to pray for to the Lord for harvesters (Matt. 9:38; Vandergriend 54-55). Opportunities to pray for unsaved friends are offered as a part

of Vandergriend's prayer seminars. Prayer inspires the realization that God is the source of our sufficiency. Developing a vision without consulting the creator can be compared to walking through a dark cavern without light. Attempting to cultivate the love environment in a church and in the community without prayer reduces fellowship and outreach efforts to mere social events that are not kingdom oriented. Prayer is one of the major foundation blocks in the HCI strategy. Another major foundation block is the love environment. Doug Bannister supports providing people with a "good hands-on, practical theology of prayer" (73). Nancy Leigh DeMoss takes prayer a step further, focusing on the practical side of prayer by providing insight regarding a consistent prayer life following Jesus' example (92).

Further, DeMoss sees the ultimate contribution of spending time alone with God in prayer as a spiritual transformation to Christlikeness (81). Reggie McNeal differs from many other writers by suggesting that a "guide to quiet time" is more like a "manual for mechanics ... than hints about how friends or lovers should spend time together" (140). McNeal promotes "a life of genuine communion with God" because "communion is about relationship, not fulfilling obligations" (141).

The disciples watched Jesus and were greatly impressed with his prayer life. He would consult with his heavenly Father often. Whether their desire was an all-night vigil or a prayer walk or checking in with his Father regarding an important situation, the disciples wanted to be able to pray like Jesus (McNeal 64). A. B. Bruce views the John 17 prayer as evidence of the "supreme importance" of this discipleship training (13). Jesus' prayer reveals their training "had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry" (13). Bruce contributed an important insight for making disciples:



The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many. (13)

This training probably ensured “the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus” was not lost as just another “vague mythical tradition” (13). Jesus expected them to do what he commanded, known as the process of “consecration” (Coleman 63). Developing people into “multiplying disciples” is certainly not a new idea (Matt. 4:19; Eims 88, 111; Coleman 136). The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is imperative in the “transformed life of a disciple” (Coleman 82). The discipleship movement was officially launched at Pentecost through the power of the Holy Spirit (Eims 39; Acts 2:5-11; Coleman 87). After all, Jesus promised the disciples would receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8). He taught them by example and by the spoken word (Coleman 92; Eims 37-38). When Jesus was with his disciples privately, he told them the meaning of his teaching. Then in Luke chapters 9 and 10, Jesus sent them out with the power and authority to do the same things they had seen him do. Jesus “gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases” and “sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2). Jesus later sent out his advance team of seventy-two others and “sent them two by two” to prepare for his upcoming visit to a town (Luke 10:1). By increasing the level of the disciples’ expectations and delegating more authority with each progressive experience, Jesus equipped them in every way to carry out his mission. In order to see the connection between Jesus’ strategy and Christian leadership today, successful pastors reveal the nonnegotiable nature of the disciple-making process.

## Love Environment Strategy

Riemenschneider's love environment strategy includes relationships within the church and also the church's care and concern for the community. One of Warren's key purposes is fellowship, which is the parallel of the love environment, and Slaughter and Bird emphasize relationship over ideology, which is designed to "encourage interaction and help people connect" (Slaughter and Bird 78; Warren 119). Church health researchers agree that revealing love for fellow Christians and for the surrounding community is a common trait among healthy growing churches (Crandall, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* 23; Hunter 49; Schwarz 36; Warren 86). Warren addresses the love environment issue by identifying the need for "high morale" and an "atmosphere of harmony" (86). Schwarz's research confirms the fact that "there is a highly significant relationship between the ability of a church to demonstrate love and its long-term growth potential" (49). Hunter confirms that the Christians' love environment stretches beyond the church, touching all individuals in their spheres of influence (49).

## Discipleship Strategy

The HCI discipleship strategy is summed up in the following list of essentials:

- Believing Christ's teachings on who God is and who believers are in Christ (John 8:31);
- Being obedient to Christ's commands (Matt. 28:19-20);
- Loving others inside the church as well as those outside the church (John 13:35; Mark 12:28-31);
- Bearing fruit (John 15:8);
- Worshipping God (Heb. 13:15).

- Sharing the gospel in example and words (Eph. 5:8-11; Col. 1:6);
- Living the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23);
- Giving time in ministry (Col. 1:10-12);
- Having compassion for the hurting (Matt. 10:42; Matt. 25:34-40);
- Dying to self to put God first in everything (Luke 14: 26-27); and,
- Managing resources wisely to give to God's work (Luke 14:33;

Riemenschneider, *Healthy Church Initiative*).

Experts agree, discipleship goes far beyond making converts (Eims 41; Coleman 65). This difficult, but worthwhile, strategy Coleman describes as “The Way of the Cross” (64). Too often the church today approaches the ministry in a way contrary to Jesus’ example, seeking “numbers of converts, candidates for baptism, and more members for the church” (41). Consequently ministry moves forward by simple addition instead of the multiplication of disciples Jesus intended. Leighton Ford recognizes Jesus’ “global strategy” through the words in Matthew 28:18, “make disciples of all nations” (59). Perhaps the number of dropout disciples today are directly related to the mass production mind-set which essentially bypasses personal involvement and ultimately reaches less people (Eims 45). Mass-produced disciples rarely go out to disciple another person because they were not mentored to do so (45). In order to give the personal attention, teaching, caring, and prayer necessary to bring a person to full maturity in Christ, much time is necessary (45-46). For Bobb Biehl, discipleship is different than mentoring because mentoring focuses on “maturity in all areas of life” (30). In contrast, discipleship focuses on “teaching spiritual disciplines” (30). However, both mentoring and discipleship have the goal of helping a person reach maturity (30). Spiritual

discipline includes obedience. God makes obedience very clear in Scripture, supplying the necessary “commands” to live a life set apart for God, “providing a human role model in Jesus Christ” and empowering believers through the Holy Spirit (Barna, *Think Like Jesus* 110). David Ferguson offers a reminder that “motivation for obedience is rooted in an intimate love relationship with Christ” (98).

HCI training stresses the importance of having the “Prayer Base, Love-Environment, and Discipleship” modules in place before moving on to establishing the “Values, Mission and Vision” strategies (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”).

### **Church Culture and Systems Analysis**

When a church loses sight of why it exists and finds itself floundering without any perceivable progress, the congregation would benefit by taking a few steps back and looking at the system driving its existence. The traditional mode of operation can imperceptibly become more important than God’s word without even realizing it.

### **Organizational Systems Theory**

Sue Mallory offers insight helpful in understanding the inner workings of a church’s mode of operation. After years of functioning in a certain way, introducing new ideas creates tension because of invasion into the comfort zone in which congregants are operating. The familiar is comfortable but not always effective (54).

Mallory discovered the importance of knowing the existing systems in the life of Brentwood Church when developing lay ministry. The equipping church system is motivated by the Scripture that describes the body of Christ. Mallory quotes Ephesians 4:11-13 in the Message, which says church health occurs when its members are “moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God’s Son,

fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ” (Peterson 2130). One of the things experts agree on is that one church cannot borrow another church’s system and expect it to work because every church has its traditions, culture, and leadership (Mallory 55; Warren 77).

Warren identifies systems thinking in his treatment regarding what drives a church:

Every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens. It may be unspoken. It may be unknown to many. Most likely it’s never been officially voted on. But it is there, influencing every aspect of the church’s life. (77)

Churches take on a corporate personality with elected leaders and self-appointed leaders. Sometimes certain families or individuals drive the ministry. In other cases traditions or desire for change may influence the way the church operates. The church may be deeply entrenched in a system in existence long before the current members were in charge.

Mallory compares a church system with “interlocking gears inside a complex machine. Turn any gear in the system and all the others move in some way” (50). A church cannot change one thing and expect everything else to stay the same. One of the temptations of attending a conference at Willow Creek or Saddleback is to rush home and try to adopt what is happening there as a transferable program, when the truth is that principles and concepts can be very helpful only when adapted to the culture of the local area. One of the important lessons learned was that “systems exist to serve people,” not the other way around (50).

Certainly, making changes is not always necessary when the system is working well, but when comfort is leading to death, intervention is necessary. Mallory’s particular

interest was to develop an “equipping ministry system” (44). Mallory formulated a series of “system-analysis” questions for a team of people to use in an observation of the church (45). Because of the nature of changing systems, being sensitive to people requires a large amount of time. Having pastoral backing is nonnegotiable for the success of any major change (45). Mallory’s senior pastor, Charles Shields, introduced her to his principle of “Management by I Don’t Know,” which expresses the idea that a pastor must seek help for the areas of ministry not in the realm of his or her gifting and expertise. Finding someone who is gifted to do a particular aspect of ministry is a valuable tool for effective ministry (46).

If discipleship is properly understood, then Jesus’ example is paramount to understanding the need for lay involvement in ministry. Jesus placed trust in the disciples, providing a good example for church leaders today. On occasion he had to rebuke them and steer them in the right direction, but ultimately he sent them out by twos to give them the opportunity to serve, allowing them to minister without his visible presence. God’s people today have the same guide through the Holy Spirit available to the disciples. In Luke 12:11-12, Jesus told his disciples, “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” Certainly the dangers these disciples faced were far greater than most of the issues faced by God’s people in the United States who are very capable of effective ministry.

### **Systems Thinking in the Field of Sociology**

The concept of people cooperating as teams to accomplish a common goal is nothing new, but large corporations caused the focus to change in late 1800s through the

early 1900s when people viewed “work as a collection of individual jobs” (Kozlowski and Ilgen77).

In recent years the global economy has required companies to establish teams to deal with changing circumstances (Kozlowski and Ilgen 80). One part of an organization will impact another (80). An example that comes to mind that demonstrates the need for interactions of various teams became apparent in the need to pull together the efforts of the nation’s intelligence organizations. These organizations, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), could complete investigations in cooperation with each other rather than each insisting on keeping their information to themselves. The ultimate result was the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, which was honored in March 2008 by President Bush for their effective coordination of the various government agencies, having kept the nation free from terrorist attacks. The unexpected attacks of 9-11 demanded a change in the system. The crisis affected many different teams who will never be the same again, especially emergency response teams including police and fire departments.

While a church must certainly make sure organizational strategy is compatible with Scripture, many ideas are similar whether applied to business management or to the church. The idea of keeping track of how people become involved and then depart from the church could be enhanced by Ann J. Jensen and Andrew Sage’s business organization strategy. Mallory, in her efforts to understand involvement of the laity, found considerable help from organizations thriving on volunteer help, such as the Red Cross (39). The Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) conference proved to be a resource offering a multitude of ideas for managing volunteers (40). The deacon

chairman at Grace Community had training in sociology, which was very helpful in developing the description of a disciplined person. His background provided logical steps for showing movement from the biblical standard leading to a desired result. When those ideas were applied to the chart, the church not only had a DDP but also had a planning tool that allowed the church to examine programming to see if it contributed to the intended result.

### **Family System's Theory Applied to Church Culture**

Gilbert R. Rendle sees the importance of systems thinking as applied to the church. His inspiration came from family systems theory, which focuses on the dynamics of family interaction and has been successfully used in relation to congregations (54). Rendle believes in the importance of having a handle on the overall picture of the congregation, allowing leaders to understand how to approach change while identifying with the characteristics of the congregation as a whole (54). Family dynamics within a congregation can have a tremendous impact of the success of church health efforts such as HCI.

### **Barna on Church Revitalization**

George Barna of Barna Research Group conducted a qualitative study of thirty churches experiencing revitalization in sixteen different states (*Turnaround Churches* 17). His study was not intended to produce statistics that could be “projected to the aggregate church population” (16). Barna relied on information from denominations, churches having experienced amazing comebacks, and research and consulting groups to compile his roster of churches. The common thread was a period of obvious success followed by plunging attendance and then moving toward a remarkable recovery.



Participating pastors agreed to open-ended interviews with themselves and their task force members. The Sunday morning worship attendance of participating churches was 135 to 3,300 (17). The result of the research was not comprehensive because of the limited number of participating churches, but did shed some light on the turnaround process. In most cases the research process revealed churches falling into deep decline do not return to health and growth (16-17).

The most common result is churches are either eventually closed or they plateau in attendance. The other discovery was that the total number of turnaround churches was few. Barna's sampling was from all parts of the United States included a "wide variety of Protestant denominations and a considerable range in the size of congregations" (*Turnaround Churches* 17). The purpose was to discover experiences of all the churches and look for information going beyond the chronicles of one congregation (17). The solutions were usually tailor-made for specific churches. The result was a "narrative of the principles" (18). Hopefully the ideas gleaned from the contributing churches will help other congregations make a major turnaround or prevent severe loss of momentum leading to defeat (18).

### **Culture Change through the Lens of the Diffusion Model**

The process of sharing research findings from other disciplines, such as science, sociology or psychology can be helpful in enhancing overall understanding of cultural changes. "Diffusion is the process in which innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers 5). Diffusion research provides some interesting insights from a classic study revered by many researchers. Any organization, including a church, can respond positively when faced

with an innovation if leaders understand how people accept or react to change. “Diffusion research is thus emerging as a single, integrated body of concepts and generalizations, even though the investigations are conducted by researchers in several scientific disciplines” (Rogers and Schoemaker 47).

Everett M. Rogers relates that his purpose is to “describe a general diffusion model and to argue for greater awareness among the various research traditions” (39). His definition of a research tradition is “a series of investigations on a similar topic” (39). Because research has a lot of similarities across various disciplines, the diffusion of innovation model is helpful in conducting research because it gives insight regarding possible outcomes in the process of helping a congregation to accept change. Rogers’ work is a classic and has become a standard for all to study and apply. Mallory discovered resistance to change with the church staff when, for the first time in the history of the church, her volunteer position was invited to the professional staff meeting. The staff members needed a change in perspective to “believe laypeople can do real ministry” (41). Mallory’s task would involve the “blessing” of her senior pastor and using her past training to utilize the elements of “awareness” and “tracking” for the purpose of keeping tabs on the involvement of laypeople (41). In applying previous training to this new situation, a nonconfrontational approach, simply drawing attention to the names of individuals who were missing from a recent choir practice, caused a colleague to realize choir member attendance needed to be tracked and individuals contacted. This approach was applied to several church ministries over a number of staff meetings to show the value of tracking the involvement of laypersons in ministry (42).

According to Rogers a “research tradition” is comprised of scholars in locations around the world that involves a network of people who exchange research discoveries and information that is important to science (40). This practice of sharing research results certainly applies to Christian leadership theory, principles, and practice. A fine example of sharing research results is found in a study conducted by Carl S. Dudley and David A. Roozen, which coordinated research for many religious groups across the United States. One element of the Faith Communities Today research revealed worship to be a “primary task” and revealed the “unique character” of each congregation as various approaches to worship are used (40). A common element appearing in most of the congregations surveyed was the “emphasis of God’s love and care” and on messages providing “practical advice for life” (40). Among those churches having started using a variety of new electronic instruments, evidence revealed a “radical increase in the authority of the Holy Spirit” among the reporting churches (40).

Dudley and Roozen also discovered in their surveys that no matter what faith group responded, larger congregations “use a broad array of alternatives to provide their members with a rich diet of music and other energizing worship experiences” (41). They note energizing worship alone is not enough. In addition, it needs to be well organized, flowing from “clear vision” in conjunction with “caring for members” (41).

### **Research Design**

One widely used research tool is a survey. “Wiersma and Jurs suggest that “[s]urvey results typically are reported in a descriptive manner” (194). For instance, LaRue gives statistics in percentages that compare the responses of pastors and

parishioners regarding their perceptions of the cause of declining attendance and the implications of these statistics (“Pastoral Leadership Styles” 1).

Source materials are needed for evaluating, for authenticating, and organizing results in regard to importance. Primary sources always take precedence over secondary sources. If various aspects of the research seem to reveal inconsistencies in the information, then these issues need to be investigated to account for disagreements found in the evidence. Synthesis of the findings provides important data to formulate additional hypotheses (Wiersma and Jurs 233). The synthesis of various sources may help to support or disprove previous conclusions and lead to accurate suppositions.

A mixed method study includes both qualitative and quantitative information. A survey based on a Likert scale provides the basis for gathering opinions in a systematic way. Martin Brett Davies provides an answer to questions regarding the best way to ask people “to express an opinion along a continuum or scale,” citing a Likert scale as a common tool (74). Experts agree that the scale should be limited in the number of choices to no more than ten and four to five points are more common (Wiersma and Jurs 171; Davies 75). The choice of options depends on whether the researcher desires to force a choice with even numbers thereby not offering a neutral possibility or to use an odd number of choices and give respondents the opportunity to remain neutral if they so choose.

*T*-tests are used to measure a number of factors pertaining to a survey. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (PASW 17.0) offers the capability of analyzing data entered into a spreadsheet and is designed to compare values in group responses (PASW 17.0). The type of *t*-test is chosen based on the number of variables

(Griffith, 229-33). Davies warns that “SPSS is a tool and only a tool” (118). The software does amazing things, but a person needs to know what to ask it to do. I sought the advice of two university sociology professors to make sure I was asking the software to make the right calculations. *T*-tests show the significance of the statistics. “A two-tailed test is one in which you have said only that there will be a difference in the results obtained from your two samples. You haven’t stipulated which way you expect the difference to be” (266). *T*-tests have limitations when applied to opinion-related statistics. When two groups in a sample are not equal and are based on opinions, a *t*-test may not be the best choice for analyzing the samples. A *t*-test is more appropriate for measuring “two groups which must be of equal sizes” (256). Nancy L. Leech, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, and Larry Daniel provide the following guidelines:

Paired samples *t* test, also known as dependent samples *t* test, is used when there are two groups to compare, wherein the scores in one group are linked or paired in the other group....There is one important assumption or condition for the paired samples *t* test: The variables should be normally distributed. This can be tested with a computer program such as SPSS with the skewness and kurtosis values with the Explore command. A graphical representation of the normal distribution can be obtained through the Q-Q plot. If the assumption of normality is not met, the Signed Rank Test should be computed instead.

A graph presents the findings in a user friendly format, allowing comparison of the significance of one group with another to observe the significance of the difference between to groups being tested. In some instances a *t*-test is not appropriate:

In social sciences, it is common for the *t*-test criteria to be unachievable, with the result that the Wilcoxon test is more frequently employed. It compares the *relative* positions of paired participants—or the same participant on two occasions—and tells you whether the pattern is such as could have occurred by chance. (Davies 258)

SPSS software performed both tests, so choosing wisely is important. The data must be entered into a spread sheet before uploading the information into the software.

An interview can provide an opportunity for personal interaction, including observation of body language and tone of voice, giving additional insights that are not perceptible through a questionnaire sent by mail or e-mail. One of the advantages listed by William Wiersma and Steven G. Jurs is that “[t]he interview provides the opportunity for in-depth probing, and elaboration and clarification of terms, if necessary” (186). The downside of the interview process is related to the amount of work needed to obtain the results, especially if a lot of travel is needed. The workload can be somewhat relieved by doing a telephone interview, but the personal face-to-face advantage is lost. A question allowing for an open-ended response will give more freedom to a person when responding. A question calling for a choice of predetermined answers allows the responses to be more easily compared when searching for emerging themes (187).

The literature on research methods is plentiful, and much care must be exercised in the process of deciding the correct tools to use to obtain the most reliable information. The best research approach is not always limited to a single method. A qualitative approach can benefit at times by the addition of quantitative research, and quantitative research can be enriched by a more personal touch provided by qualitative data (Creswell and Clark 33). A follow-up interview could provide insights not found in an impersonal survey and is not limited to a choice of options.

### **Summary**

Conclusions provide a summary of the research tying in the findings with an explanation of the choice of methodology. This portion is the expressed opinion of a

writer, given the person's analysis of the results of the collection of data (Wiersma and Jurs 424).

The culture of a church is comprised of history, families attending the church, theology, health, training, systems, organization, and the connection with God through the Holy Spirit. When a church group begins to decline, intervention needs to take place. The strategy must be based on God's word and God's will. Church health experts agree on many important principles and strategies.

One of the words impressed upon my mind is *intentional*. Most church leaders and followers would agree that Jesus has been given authority to command his followers to begin the process of making disciples. God's people sometimes lack the intentional involvement in making disciples. While not every person is gifted in evangelism, every believer can have a part in making disciples.

Prayer is an indispensable ingredient in the health of a church. Connecting with God before attempting to fulfill his commission is essential. Jesus taught prayer, modeled it, and depended on it to bring glory to his Father.

Another key word is strategy. Most believers know they should be making disciples, but very few seem to know how. A well-designed strategy teaches students how to make disciples. One of the obstacles to involvement of the laity in making disciples is the mind-set of hiring professionals to do all the work of ministry. Healthy, thriving congregations are rediscovering the talent and spiritual gifts of members and setting them free to find creative ways to serve God by serving their community.

Every church has a system that reveals the way a church operates. Tradition, vision, goals, structures, and the organizational design are some of the elements included

in the church's system. The church system is colored by culture, economics, and many other factors making up the uniqueness of a local congregation.

Purpose is another theme made popular by Warren. In a world lacking purpose, Christ is the source of a purpose-driven life (115). One of the missions of the church is to help people discover their God-given purpose.

The church was not launched until the power of the Spirit was released at Pentecost (Acts 1:8). No strategy of church health and growth will work without the power of the Holy Spirit.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

Church decline is not only a problem for Missionary Churches but also for many other denominations, as revealed in the review of literature. HCI strategy has many elements but the need to make reproducing disciples continues to emerge as the primary focus. A strong prayer base and a healthy love environment are necessary to establish a strong discipleship strategy.

This study focused on the two-fold purpose of discovering the extent to which the participating congregations implemented key elements of the HCI strategy and to observe changes in the culture, attitudes, and beliefs of Missionary Churches participating in the HCI strategy.

#### **Research Questions**

Four research questions measured the effectiveness of the implementation of HCI strategies. The first three research questions addressed the degree of implementation of the HCI strategy and the fourth question addressed changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes.

##### **Research Question #1**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the HCI prayer base model?

The importance of prayer, as the basis of all ministries, is foundational in establishing the necessity of the power of God. Coaches gave task force members and pastors four key assignments for the purpose of establishing a solid prayer base. The first

is “praying for the lost” (Riemenschneider “Healthy Church Initiative”). The need for prayer for lost people is supported by actual conversions of people within the influence of previous churches participating in HCI. Coaches encouraged task force members to pray regularly for lost people, to complete an assignment to encourage other groups to pray for lost people, and to pray for the people task force members had written on their list.

## **Research Question #2**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the love environment strategy in their congregations and in their corresponding communities?

The love environment encompasses both the relationships within the church family and the compassion for the community, exceeding mere words with the Christlike actions of individuals and groups within the church. Respondents identified actions taken by individuals and groups as a result of the HCI strategy. During HCI training, task force members evaluated how their church discovers the needs of individuals and families and expressed what is done to “show love and concern” (Riemenschneider, “Healthy Church Initiative”). They also discussed how their church grows closer together.

Initially, members of the task force expressed how they show love and concern to visitors and answered whether or not the community around them even knows that their church exists and cares for them.

Ultimately, coaches gave task force members the assignment to plan an event that gives back to the community, expecting nothing in return. This study sought to discover if these practices have become a way of life in the church or just temporary assignments.

### **Research Question #3**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations developed a description of a disciplined person, which translated into a life transformation discipleship strategy?

Committed task force members, with a considerable investment of time and effort, can reasonably achieve the goal of creating a DDP. In order to carry out the process of developing a description of a disciplined person, a team effort produced not only what began as a description in the form of an easy to understand chart but what ultimately became a guide for planning ministry designed to reach the goal of fully developed disciples who, in turn, are able to disciple others.

When the task force at Grace Community neared completion of the DDP, many possibilities began to emerge, utilizing the DDP as a launching pad for ministry planning. The DDP doubles as an evaluation tool to discover if the various ministries of the church are contributing to the development of disciples or not.

### **Research Question #4**

To what degree have new healthy church practices begun to change participating Missionary Churches' culture, beliefs, and attitudes? This study sought to discover if HCI strategy had become part of the of the participating Missionary Churches' systems, part of the way things are done rather than one-time events that were planned, executed, and never revisited.

### **Population and Participants**

Participating Missionary Churches provided the information to evaluate the effectiveness of HCI through responses to a qualitative questionnaire survey.

## Design of Study

Because church decline is occurring faster than new churches are being planted, something must be done to intervene in the process so the church returns to the incline (growth) mode. The Healthy Church Initiative presents a strategy involving a pastor-appointed task force whose mission is to develop its own strategy with the help of a coach trained in the HCI strategy. Rather than waiting until a declining church is beyond revitalization, the church task force is coached through the process to prepare the congregation for spiritual health.

Declining churches invariably fall short in Jesus' strategy of making disciples who will disciple others. Jesus' approach incorporated a close relationship with a manageable number of disciples who watched his life and listened to his words. In a culture that highly values knowledge, individuals and groups consider the job completed when they know the material. The laws of leadership reveal that influence is a major factor. John Maxwell supports the idea by making it part of his definition of leadership: "If you don't have influence, you will never be able to lead" (11).

The coaching model for leading a church through a major transformation allows an unbiased voice to draw the principles and procedures for the intervention from task force members, including leaders who represent various opinions and viewpoints from the congregation. The result is a culturally and demographically relevant understanding of the church's characteristics and personality.

When a church has ownership in its own plan of health, the people are connected with a strategy tailored to their situation. This study assessed the effectiveness of HCI by asking pastors and task force members for feedback regarding the first three foundational

HCI statements, including the prayer base, the love environment, and the discipleship module. A sampling of some congregation members was also included to see if any aspect of HCI impacted the greater church body. Ultimately, more research will be needed to assess how congregation members and attendees responded to the impact of HCI. The principles of HCI are presented to the congregation as the strategy of Jesus, because the focus of HCI is to build the congregation's effectiveness on the teachings of Jesus directly and through the disciples he mentored.

Measuring the degree of effectiveness of HCI is determined by discovering whether or not the pastor and the task force members were able to implement the basic elements of HCI and how the strategy has impacted their culture, attitudes, and actions. Because HCI is an ongoing process, the strategies need regular evaluation to see what obstacles impeded progress and what things were well received.

Experience reveals that the specific interventions need not be identical for all churches. Specific implementation of the strategies from other churches cannot be reproduced but can be helpful in shedding light on the strengths and weaknesses of each church's personalized health plan.

*The Purpose Driven Church* (Warren); *Natural Church Development*, (Schwarz); *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church*, (Crandall), and *If It Could Happen Here* (Patton) are examples of church strategies offering possible suggestions for enhancing or revealing missing principles that may work in conjunction with HCI strategy. HCI trained coaches to guide each church in finding a program that helped to carry out Jesus' plan in their own contexts.

## **Instrumentation**

All the participating churches took part in the questionnaire I constructed with a scale of 1-5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. I contacted pastors by phone who responded to reply cards requesting volunteers for conference-call interviews with the pastor and task force members using a researcher-designed interview questionnaire. I designed the questionnaire using elements of culture change suggested by Judd Allen and organized it according to systems typical in culture change. The “five elements of culture” identified included norms, values, climate, peer support, and organizational support. The questions reflected these cultural change indicators and guided the participants to pull out themes rather than to manipulate the responses. HCI coaches trained the pastors and task force members of individual Missionary Churches. The twenty-nine participating churches, chosen because of stagnated or declining growth, are in the Central, East Central, North Central, Michigan, and Northwest districts of the Missionary Church, located in Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Washington states. The original questions composed by Riemenschneider provided the basic content of the current questionnaire. The task force members answered the original questions at the beginning of their training. Because the responses to those questions were not collected by the various coaches, I designed the current questions to determine the effectiveness of the coaching process in conveying the strategy of HCI. The original questions presented to each church task force determined the portions of the strategy already in place before HCI training and the degree of effectiveness on a scale of one to ten. The questions for this study determined the changes, if any, realized by implementing HCI strategies.

The researcher-designed questionnaire gave the respondents an opportunity to respond in a manner revealing the degree to which they believe these principles and practices have been realized in their congregation. The follow-up interview questionnaire revealed changes in the culture of the churches regarding their mind-set concerning prayer, the love environment, and the discipleship strategy. Further evidence of the influence of Jesus' discipleship plan, taught by HCI, revealed the decisions and plans made to put the strategy into action. The responses of the participating churches revealed the emerging themes.

The central concept of this study was to draw from the experience of the participants the areas of the strategy most helpful, the areas most frustrating, the areas resulting in success, the areas difficult to implement, and the areas causing participation to cease. This particular study relied on general interviews, observations, and questionnaires.

The churches participating in the research completed the prayer base strategy, the love environment strategy and discipleship strategy, which included a description of a disciplined person. The questionnaire and interview process lasted approximately six weeks. The potential number of participants was six hundred. Seven pastors responded with self-addressed postcards to participate in the follow-up interviews involving the pastor and the task force members. The remaining eight pastors responded to personal phone calls. Sixty-nine people participated in the questionnaire survey.

Because the Missionary Church is largely populated by white Americans of European descent, the participating churches provided data representing the majority of churches in the participating Missionary Church districts in the United States. Currently, other

districts have not participated in HCI. Hispanic churches received training separately because of the language barrier, so they were not part of this particular study. The largest concentration of Missionary Church congregations is located in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan; therefore, the districts involved provided generalized results that could be helpful to most Missionary congregations in the Midwest. Also, a small number of churches in the Pacific Northwest participated in the process.

The Likert scale questionnaire was suitable for a mixed method approach assessing attitudes and opinions concerning the implementation of HCI in the participating congregations. Likert-type items are useful where the respondents benefit by choosing a range of responses from one to five from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The instruction letter offered to share a summary of the results with the participating churches. The results revealed by approaching the research from different perspectives have the potential of opening opportunities for dialogue and improving the effectiveness of future training. Included with the Likert-scale questionnaire was Hybels' pastoral leadership style assessment tool, seeking the perspective of the pastors, the task force members, and a sample of congregation members. I included a letter signed by the Missionary Church president, Dr. Hossler, to encourage participation and establish credibility. I asked the pastors to provide demographic information concerning the size of the population, the location and age of the church, the ethnic mix, and style of worship. The demographic information also included the pastor's opinion of the degree of motivation for change and past exposure to church health material. Finally the information included five-year attendance statistics and the population and the economic trends. The demographics provided information revealing increased conversion growth



occurring even in churches that declined in overall attendance, existed in economically stressed areas, and experienced varying pastoral leadership styles.

In quantitative research, “[s]urveys are used to measure attitudes, opinions, or achievements—any number of variables in natural settings” (Wiersma and Jurs 155). One of the steps suggested by Wiersma and Jurs includes a “definition of the research problem” to begin the research plan (163). Another step was deciding the size of the survey sample, which in this case, included twenty-nine churches participating in the HCI training. Next, I revised the original HCI assessment questionnaire developed by Riemenschneider to evaluate the participants’ progress since initial exposure to HCI strategies. I planned a follow-up conference call telephone interview with task force members, including pastors, to seek evidence of change in culture, beliefs, and attitudes. I sought to determine whether pastors and task force members completed the original assignments given during the coaching sessions. Experts agree a pilot or beta testing of the instrument increases reliability and helps to expose items needing clarity or improvement (Wiersma and Jurs 171). I conducted a pilot test of the Likert scale questionnaire using some HCI coaches and the research reflection team. The pilot test participants were instructed not to participate in the actual survey to avoid bias. The pastors of the participating churches gave the official survey to each of the task force members, including themselves, and selected up to ten congregation members to participate.

A Likert scale with agree-disagree response to statements measured the participants’ opinions (Neuman 182). I constructed the five choices in a balanced fashion (see Figure 3.1). Research shows the addition of more than seven steps does not

significantly increase reliability and more than seven can pressure a person to “make falsely fine distinctions” (Neuman 182; Patton 41-42). One way to assess attitudes is to include both positive and negative statements (Patton 38). Including both positive and negative construction helps avoid the possibility the respondents will operate in a repetitious mode without really analyzing each statement (38). Patton suggests including “don’t know” or “neutral” only if many respondents may be unfamiliar with the subject (36).

In regard to a healthy church, task force members not only had different experiences and ideas, but also similar experiences. Not all subjects can be tested numerically. When members are asked questions revealing their experiences, much is learned about the systems operating in a church. If one person has an opinion, it may be valid and need to be scrutinized. However, if the pattern of experience begins to repeat regularly among all participants, then a significant idea is more apparent. Possible responses of HCI church task force members might strongly agree that an “aging congregation” was the real cause of decline as shown by LaRue’s study, but a contrast similar to LaRue’s survey response would throw a considerably large shadow on the survey results if 65 percent of HCI pastor’s surveyed thought the cause was a “loss of vision” (LaRue, “Back from the Brink, Leadership”).

Coaches and pastors may assume they know how task force members think and discover they really have a completely different perspective on the reasons a church may be unhealthy as discovered in LaRue’s research (“Back from the Brink, Leadership”).

I used both questionnaires and interviews to examine the effectiveness of HCI.

I conducted the interviews personally by phone. The pastors gathered task force members at a predetermined time to participate in a conference call interview. The questionnaire in this study was specifically designed to reveal changes in culture, beliefs and attitudes in participating congregations. The questions were organized in categories suggested in Allen's "Culture Change Planner."

I personally interviewed Riemenschneider, designer of HCI, to discover his assessment of the responses of the churches that participated in HCI training sessions.

A response group consisted of task force participants whose pastor completed and returned the response card indicating his or her willingness to participate in a conference call follow-up interview after completing the Likert-style questionnaire. This group provided input regarding changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes.

In surveys, the questions must be associated with the hypotheses (Wiersma and Jurs 165). The questions flow naturally from the "research problem," the "review of literature," and the "definition of variables" (166). Rick Harvey's study of church health and growth used the review of literature to discover the categories for his study and then wrote a number of questions for each category. Harvey proposed to discover which church health characteristics were found in each congregation (64).

The original Healthy Church Initiative questionnaire provided the basis for the questionnaire. The questionnaire used a Likert-scale, which Wiersma and Jurs identify as "a scale with a number of points that provide ordinal scaled measurement" (170). The instructions stated, "Choose the response most representative of your opinion. If you do not have enough information about a statement to determine your level of agreement, choose 'neither agree nor disagree'" (see Figure 3.1). The researcher gleaned and

organized the responses for the purpose of reducing the data to pertinent information addressing the problem (Wiersma and Jurs 206). In this particular study, the words “strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree” were printed at the top of each page with the numbers 1-5 printed to the right of each question. Some respondents in this study were not part of the training process for HCI, so the following format was used to give an option that did not include agreement or disagreement (see Figure 3.1).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**Figure 3.1 Response choices for Likert scale.**

The research questions provided the basis of the lead questions for the interview along with appropriate follow-up questions for each lead question (see Appendix C). Wiersma and Jurs support the option of choosing either “open-ended and casual or ... structured” interview styles (257). The interview process has several drawbacks. The criteria is similar to determining the reliability of a witness in a court case. Participants may or may not be cooperative, they may secretly plan to give inaccurate answers just to taint the outcome, or a question may be embarrassing for them to respond (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Shaw, and Smith 247). Glynis M. Breakwell, Scan Hammond, Chris Fife-Shaw, and Jonathon Smith provide some hints to reduce the potential negative effects of interviewing, including a “systematic set of questions” designed to enhance their ability to remember or to understand what is needed, so they will be more likely to participate (247). Because a telephone interview must be brief and consistent in format, a

more structured interview would be more practical. Triangulation (“the Process of Qualitative Cross-Validation”) would add legitimacy to the interviews by talking to the pastors, task force members, and congregation members, comparing their different viewpoints concerning the HCI experience (247).

Questions used to discover the differing viewpoints of the pastors, task force members, and congregation members who agreed to participate in a telephone interview are included in Appendix D.

All the Missionary Church congregations in this study participated in the first three modules of HCI training.

### **Pilot Test**

HCI coaches and members of the research reflection team took a pilot test to evaluate the validity of the instrument. These participants were instructed not to take the final survey. The literature review and Riemenschneider’s input provided evidence of the validity of the study as well as emerging themes satisfying the goals of HCI. Dr. Riemenschneider provided his observations of the HCI training process during a personal interview.

### **Variables**

Participants in a survey have many different backgrounds, beliefs and pre-suppositions. “A variable is a characteristic that takes on different values or conditions for different individuals” (Wiersma and Jurs 33). The variables among churches included size of the community, location of the church, ethnic mix of the congregation and community, financial status, age of congregation, and pastoral leadership. The demographics related to individuals included, age, gender, spiritual maturity, ethnicity,

position in the organization, and experience. Variables among individuals included age, gender, spiritual maturity, ethnicity, position in the organization, experience, and degree of implementation of elements.

The completed assignments, such as establishing prayer for lost people in a number of groups and boards, provided evidence of the effectiveness of the HCI strategy. Other evidence emerged in people coming to faith in Christ and being mentored individually and in groups. Community outreach efforts, reported by congregations, provided further evidence through the efforts of small groups and individual random acts of kindness. Congregations also reported increased attendance in worship services and small groups.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The reliability of HCI research involving the task force had a much greater potential because the participants were motivated individuals dedicated to the group. The questions were built around the elements of HCI, which the task force members have spent many months developing. Task force members, having the same basic input in their training, knew their subject and were not intimidated by it. The Likert scale provided consistency in the manner of conducting the survey, giving each respondent the identical set of choices. Some researchers argue against providing a neutral category in order to force a choice (Neuman 182). I offered a choice of neither agree nor disagree for those who lacked enough knowledge to agree or disagree. Congregation members sometimes chose to remain neutral on some questions because they did not take HCI training.

The researcher must interpret the results in a way that is appropriate for the situation. Wiersma and Jurs state, “[V]alidity of measurement addresses the question,

‘Does the instrument measure the characteristic, trait, or whatever, for which it was intended?’” (326). Validity verifies if an instrument measures what is intended. An interpretation is valid if it specifically addresses the problem being assessed (326). Barna’s research reveals the study of turnaround churches was “not a large enough sample to cover the gambit of congregations;” however, the very lack of available churches that met the survey requirements sufficiently revealed that churches rarely recover with new growth (*Turnaround Churches* 17). The study still provided enough validity to gain some knowledge of what congregations and pastors learned helping others facing the same challenges. Sometimes momentum is lost in the very early stages of the decision-making process (15). In contrast, the validity of LaRue’s study is easier to observe by viewing his tables that reveal the percentages of responses to specific questions (“Back from the Brink”).

The validity of a survey or questionnaire can be tested in two ways. One would be to test if the process makes sense, a judgment call. The other way is performance related and might apply to a task or a test that could be measured as “job performance” (Wiersma and Jurs 327). Validity is the relationship “between the test being validated and the criterion measure” (327). In other words, the tool should do what is it designed to do.

The quantitative questionnaire using a Likert scale specifically tested the degree to which participating congregations put into practice various elements of HCI strategy indicating areas of HCI strategy that needed improvement or change. The ability or inability to expedite every aspect of HCI does not imply success or failure on the part of each congregation. If most churches were able to implement a segment of the strategy, then the researcher could conclude the intended response was reasonable. If most

congregations totally excluded a particular aspect of the strategy, then that portion should be revisited to determine why the particular portion was avoided, rejected, or perhaps misunderstood.

### **Data Collection**

Pastors of the participating churches received a letter inviting them to take part in the survey and to help enlist the participation of the task force members. I sent a letter of endorsement including an encouragement to participate from Dr. Hossler, president of the Missionary Church. This letter also assured participants that their personal responses would not be seen by Dr. Hossler.

In addition to task force members, I asked pastors to encourage up to ten congregation members to participate. The letter explained the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of HCI. I mailed surveys to each church to be filled out and stapled shut before returning to their pastor to maintain their privacy. Also, I provided a postcard for those willing to respond to a telephone interview. I then processed the data.

The questionnaires were kept in separate envelopes to indicate the church supplying the unnamed individuals' information. I included response cards with the questionnaire for pastors who were willing to participate in phone interviews along with any willing task force members. The cover letter assured participants their personal responses would be kept confidential. Respondents provided their responses by return mail. I separated the survey responses into pastor, task force member, and congregation member categories to observe whether the pastors tended to have a different perspective from the task force members or congregation members. I recorded the interviews with the permission of the participants for the purpose of taking notes and then wrote a verbatim



account to look for emerging themes. I also received insights from an interview with the designer of HCI, Dr. Riemenschneider.

The following list summarizes the data collection process:

- Riemenschneider provided a survey to each task force to determine the health of each church. The results were not collected at the time.
- The researcher modified the original questionnaire determine the changes influenced by HCI strategy.
- The modified survey was mailed to all the participating churches.
- The pastor of each church also received a demographics questionnaire.
- Each pastor was invited to gather the task force for a follow-up interview.
- Churches agreed to participate in an interview focusing on changes in culture, beliefs, and attitudes in the congregation inspired by HCI training.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the data by looking for emerging themes revealing changed culture, beliefs and attitudes. I studied the results of the questionnaires and interviews to discover evidence of key concepts of HCI prayer base, love environment and discipleship strategies becoming part of the participating Missionary Churches' culture, beliefs, and attitudes. I used descriptive statistical tools to assess the results. "[D]escriptive statistics refers to the analysis of data of an entire population. In other words, descriptive statistics is merely using numbers to describe a known data set" (Heffner 8.1).

I examined the data to discover repeating patterns appearing in the answers of participants revealing significant trends and responses. One criterion included the different perspectives of participants by category. I compared and contrasted the

perceptions of pastors, task force members, and congregation members to discover areas of agreement as well as areas of difference.

I established another criterion to note the different perspectives of participants living in categories ranging from small rural communities to large towns and cities. I discovered specific evidence revealing a need to establish the prayer base, love environment, and discipleship strategies to promote church health.

I sent surveys to all Missionary Church congregations participating in the first three strategies of HCI and contacted twenty-nine churches with responses from fifteen churches participating in either the survey or the interview or both.

I conducted interviews of the task force members, including the pastors, who voluntarily responded to postcard invitations and phone invitations. Congregation members were not included in the interviews because they did not participate in the training. I analyzed the surveys and interviews to discover repeating themes in order to develop theoretic constructs and used *t*-tests to analyze the significance levels of the survey responses.

### **Summary**

I sent surveys to all Missionary Churches participating in the first three strategies of HCI. The researcher contacted the twenty-nine churches and fifteen churches responded.

I conducted interviews of pastors and task force members in churches where pastors voluntarily responded to invitation cards or to personal phone calls. Finally, I analyzed the surveys to discover repeating themes in order to develop theoretic constructs.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I assured each participant that the information would not single out any particular church. The survey responses were kept anonymous, and participants were assured that surveys would be destroyed and the results would be kept electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until the approval of the dissertation. I gave the participants the option to refuse to answer any or all of the questions on the survey. I informed the participants that the return of the surveys, sealed and placed in the return envelope, served as their permission to blend their responses into the research findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

The body of Christ is a metaphor describing the Church. The Scriptures say, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). A body must be healthy to function properly. This study focused on the two fold purpose of discovering the extent to which the participating congregations implemented key elements of the HCI strategy and to observe changes in the culture, attitudes, and beliefs of Missionary Churches participating in the HCI strategy. The Healthy Church Initiative is a strategy based on Scripture and was designed to motivate, encourage, and equip churches to become the healthy body of believers Christ intended. This study sought the degree of implementation of HCI and the changes in culture, attitudes, and beliefs motivated by following Jesus’ strategy to become a healthy body of believers. The key elements of HCI are intended to equip the church to become fully mature followers of Christ.

#### **Participants**

I sent surveys to the pastors of twenty-nine Missionary Church congregations that took part in the HCI process, with a request to involve the pastors, task force members, and up to ten members of each church. The research included the following participation:

- Thirteen of the twenty-nine churches (45 percent) participated in the survey.
- Five of the thirteen churches participated in the interviews.
- Two churches participated only in the interviews.
- Fifteen total churches participated in the research (52 percent).

The age of the churches varied. The oldest congregation was 154 years old and the youngest was ten years old. The majority of the churches (64.2 percent) had blended worship styles using a mixture of hymns and contemporary music. The predominant ethnic group of the participating churches was white (92.3 percent). The survey did not request specific information on other ethnic groups because a high percentage of white members were anticipated in most of the congregations. Of the two churches that participated solely in the interviews, only one had a multicultural ethnic mix. Churches A through M, except Church L, had five-year conversion growth rates ranging from 1 to 29 percent (see Table 4.2). The five-year average conversion growth rate was computed by dividing the number of recorded spiritual conversions by the average attendance from each previous year (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). The five-year attendance did not always increase along with the conversion growth because the overall attendance experienced losses for other reasons such as declining population in the community and deaths. The term *growing* indicates an increase in the worship attendance through the five-year period. The term *declining* indicates a reduction in worship attendance during the five-year period and the term *plateaued* indicates a level attendance during the five-year period.

**Table 4.1. Demographics of Participating Missionary Churches**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>% White</b>	<b>Worship Style</b>	<b>Avg. Att.</b>	<b>5-yr. Att.</b>
Church A	10	30,000	rural	99	Contemp.	286	growing
Church B	50	30,000	small city	99	Blended	62	declining
Church C	58	5,000	rural	95	Blended	96	declining
Church D	100	7,000	small town	92	Blended	31	plateaued
Church E	100	30,000	small town	100	Traditional	132	growing
Church F	21	70,000	small city	97	Blended	105	plateaued
Church G	120	50,000	rural	96	Blended	69	growing
Church H	150	11,000	rural	100	Blended	146	growing
Church I	112	6,000	small city	100	Traditional	71	declining
Church J	154	3,500	rural	100	Blended	155	declining
Church K	74	75,000	rural	95	Blended	113	growing
Church L	75	75,000	rural	100	Blended	n/r	declining
Church M	80	40,000	small city	85	Contemp.	225	plateaued

n/r = no response; Avg. = Average; Att. = Attendance

**Table 4.2. More Demographics of Participating Missionary Churches**

<b>Church</b>	<b>CGR/5yr</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Economy</b>	<b>Pastor/yr</b>	<b>P.L.S.</b>
Church A	9.93	growing	growing	Weak	2.5	n/r
Church B	7.93	stable	stable	moderate	9	Shepherding
Church C	5	growing	stable	moderate	4	Shepherding
Church D	29	shrinking	stable	Weak	6.5	Managing
Church E	2.5	stable	stable		26	Shepherding
Church F	1.5	shrinking	stable	Weak	15	Shepherding
Church G	1	stable	growing	moderate	2	Visionary
Church H	5.25	stable	stable	moderate	5	Shepherding
Church I	6.6	stable	stable	Weak	11	Shepherding
Church J	5.3	stable	stable	moderate	0.5	Managing
Church K	21	growing	growing	moderate	10.5	n/r
Church L	n/r	stable	stable	Weak	18	n/r
Church M	14	growing	shrinking	moderate	8	Team building

CGR = Conversion Growth Rate; P.L.S. = Pastoral Leadership Style: n/r = no response

The churches participating in HCI included growing, plateaued, and declining churches. The demographics provide information for observation but not enough data to provide significant trends. Three of the churches declining in worship attendance had a shepherd pastoral leadership style. All the declining churches in this study were located in rural and small city areas. Two of the three plateaued churches are in shrinking communities. All of the growing churches were located in stable or growing communities. Two of the three growing churches had shepherd style pastoral leadership. Three of the churches failed to report the pastoral leadership style. The conversion growth rate (percentage of recorded spiritual conversions divided by the previous year's average attendance) did not appear to be related to size, place, age, location, stability of population, pastoral leadership style, or economic conditions. Subsequent interviews of

seven churches revealed a greater commitment to the Healthy Church Initiative Strategy in those churches with the highest conversion growth rate, but not all churches that were highly committed to the HCI strategy had a significant conversion growth rate.

### **Research Question #1**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the HCI prayer base model?

Pastors, task force members, and congregation members of thirteen participating Missionary Church congregations responded to questions concerning the implementation of the prayer base strategy. Not all congregation members were trained in HCI strategy.

The prayer base strategy provides churches with the tools to strengthen the prayer ministry of the church and is designed to promote prayer for spiritually lost people, to encourage intentional extended prayer in church board meetings and small groups, and to challenge church leaders to recruit a personal prayer team. The prayer base strategy also encourages greater communication of prayer needs between leadership and the congregation. The main purpose of the prayer base is help church members connect with God through his Holy Spirit, leading to compassion for the lost.

The discrepancy between theory and practice is much more noticeable when the statistics of all participants in the HCI strategy survey are combined. Nine (60 percent) of the prayer base strategy survey questions received higher than 50 percent positive responses.

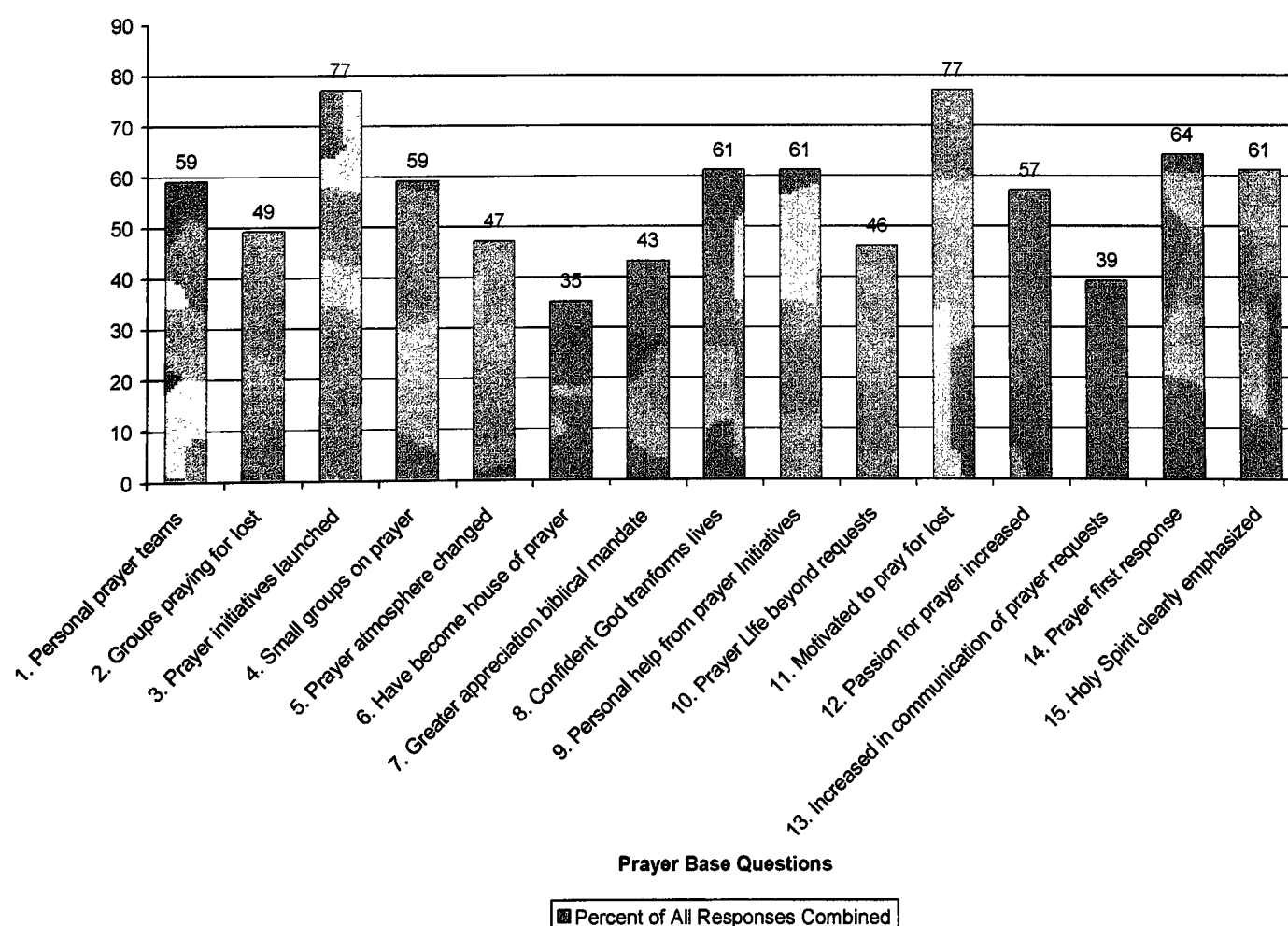
The following statistics include a combination of both agree and strongly agree responses. Forty-eight respondents (77 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that HCI gave the church a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for prayer and motivated them



to pray for the lost. Forty-two respondents (61 percent) also agreed or strongly agreed that HCI had impacted their confidence that God transforms lives through the prayer base strategy.

Only thirty-four respondents (49 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that small groups were praying for lost people. Only twenty-seven respondents (39 percent) agreed that communication of prayer needs increased.

Only twenty-four respondents (35 percent) agreed or strongly agreed their church became a house of prayer because of HCI. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their prayer lives had expanded beyond a list of requests (46 percent). Prayer became their first response (64 percent), and the prayer base strategy clearly emphasized the Holy Spirit (61 percent; see Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1. Favorable responses to the prayer base strategy.**

Table 4.3 provides data concerning the prayer base strategy that is specific to pastors, task force members, and congregation members. It lists the percentage of positive responses, combining agree and strongly agree choices. Distribution statistics are displayed in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

**Table 4.3. Favorable Responses to the Prayer Base Strategy (N=12, N=24, N=33)**

<b>Prayer Base Agreeable Responses</b>	<b>Pastors</b>	<b>Task Force</b>	<b>Cong.</b>
1. Personal Prayer Teams	66.6	54.1	59.3
2. Groups Praying for Lost	50.0	45.8	54.5
3. Prayer Initiatives Launched	100.0	75.0	69.6
4. Small Groups on Prayer	50.0	70.8	54.5
5. Prayer atmosphere changed	83.3	70.8	65.6
6. Have become House of Prayer	33.3	41.6	81.8
7. Greater appreciation Biblical Mandate	66.6	66.6	42.4
8. Confident God transforms lives	66.6	70.8	75.7
9. Personal Help from Prayer Initiatives	91.6	75.0	45.4
10. Prayer Life beyond requests	83.3	75.0	65.6
11. Motivated to pray for lost	91.6	79.1	69.6
12. Passion for prayer increased	75.0	58.3	48.4
13. Increase in communication of prayer requests	33.3	41.6	39.3
14. Prayer first response	66.6	66.6	42.4
15. Holy Spirit clearly emphasized	45.4	62.5	66.6

**Table 4.4 Implementation of Prayer Base Strategy (N=14)**

Prayer Base—Paired Samples Test				
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pastors—Task Force	.968	14	.350
Pair 2	Pastors—Congregation	1.318	14	.209

The HCI survey measured the degree of implementation of the prayer base strategy with fifteen indicators. Pastors were compared with task force members and congregation members with no significant differences in their responses Task force members were compared with congregation members for their responses to the survey (see Table 4.3) revealing a statistical significance of .007 (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5 Prayer Base—Paired Samples Test**

Prayer Base Paired Samples Test				
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Task Force—Congregation	3.002	22	.007

### **Prayer for Lost People**

Pastors (91.6 percent) were greatly motivated to pray for lost people, supported by task force members (79.1 percent) and congregation members (69.6 percent). The surveys, however, revealed that prayer for lost people has not become a priority in small groups (pastors 50 percent, task force 45.8 percent, and congregation 54.5 percent). Congregation members (54.5 percent) appear to be more convinced than their pastors (41.6 percent) and task force (45.8 percent) that people were praying for the lost.

### **Launch of New Prayer Initiatives**

Twelve (100 percent) of pastors indicated that prayer initiatives were launched. Eighteen task force members (75 percent) and twenty three congregation members (69.6 percent) supported this response. Nine pastors (75 percent ) and eighteen task force members (75 percent) gained the most personal help from prayer initiatives, followed by fifteen congregation members (45.4 percent).

### **Prayer Atmosphere Changed**

Pastors (83.3 percent) were strongly convinced that the prayer atmosphere had changed because of HCI strategy. Task force members (70.8 percent) and congregation members (46.8 percent) reasonably supported this response.

### **Prayer as First Response**

Pastors (66.6 percent) and task force members (66.6 percent) and congregation members (69.6 percent) together agreed that prayer had become a first response to life situations.

### **Holy Spirit Clearly Emphasized**

Congregation members (66.6 percent) and task force members (62.5 percent) were more convinced than their pastors (41.6 percent) that the HCI strategy clearly emphasized the Holy Spirit's direction.

### **Research Question #2**

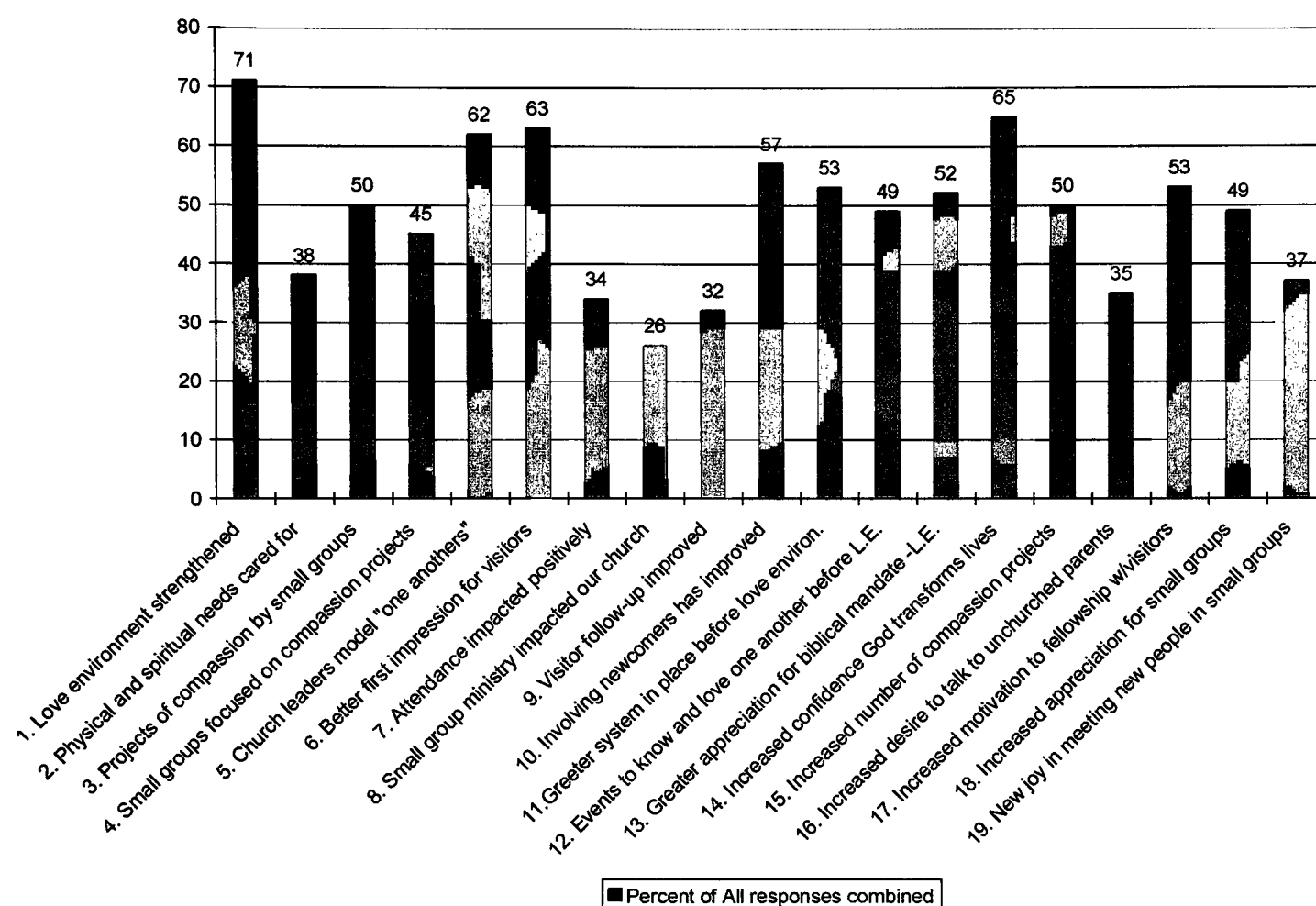
To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the love environment strategy in their congregations and in their corresponding communities?

## Report Data

The love environment strategy provides the tools necessary to strengthen relationships within the church and to motivate the church to reach out to the surrounding community.

Forty-nine respondents (71 percent) believed that HCI strengthen the love environment in their churches. Forty-five respondents (65 percent ) believed HCI inspired a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for the love environment strategy. Forty-three respondents (63 percent) believed their church leaders modeled the “one another” passages of scripture. Forty-three respondents (63 percent) believed HCI inspired efforts to improve visitor’s first impressions. Forty three respondents (63 percent) agreed that HCI motivated small groups to do projects of compassion in their communities.

Responses to the love environment strategy questions on the survey reveal several areas where the strategy is well accepted in theory, but the practices associated with a healthy love environment are sometimes either weak or not in place at all (see Figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2. Favorable responses to the love environment strategy of all participants.**

Pastors, task force members, and congregation members were asked questions about the impact of the love environment strategy in their local churches and communities (see Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6. Favorable Responses to the Love Environment Strategy (N=15; N=24; N=33)**

<b>Love Environment Strategy Responses</b>	<b>Pastors %</b>	<b>Task Force %</b>	<b>Congregation %</b>
1. Love environment strengthened	83.3	75.0	62.5
2. Physical and Spiritual Needs Cared For	25.0	37.5	43.7
3. Projects of Compassion by small groups	41.6	58.3	46.8
4. Small Groups focused on compassion projects	63.6	50.0	37.5
5. Church leaders model "one another" passages	66.6	66.6	56.2
6. Better first impression for visitors	75.0	62.5	59.3
7. Attendance impacted positively	41.6	29.1	34.3
8. Small Group Ministry impacted our church	33.3	29.1	21.8
9. Visitor follow-up improved	41.6	45.8	18.7
10. Involving Newcomers has improved	58.3	62.5	53.1
11. Greeter system in place before Love Environment	50.0	50.0	56.2
12. Events to know and love one another before L.E.*	72.7	50.0	43.7
13. Greater appreciation for Biblical mandate -L.E.*	63.6	58.3	48.3
14. Increased confidence God transforms lives	75.0	62.5	62.5
15. Increased number of compassion projects	66.6	50.0	43.7
16. Increased desire to talk to unchurched parents	75.0	41.6	15.6
17. Increased motivation to fellowship w/visitors	41.6	62.5	50.0
18. Increased appreciation for small groups	58.3	54.1	40.6
19. New joy in meeting new people in small groups	41.6	50.0	25.0

\*L.E.= love environment

The HCI survey measured the degree of implementation of the love environment with nineteen indicators. Pastors were compared with task force members with no significant difference, however congregation members differed with pastors regarding the love environment with a significance of significance of .003 (two-tailed; see Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7. Love Environment—Paired Samples Test**

		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pastors—Task Force	1.328	18	.201
Pair 2	Pastors—Congregation	3.457	18	.003

Task force members were compared with congregation members for their responses to the survey (see Table 4.8), revealing a statistical significance of .007 (two-tailed).

**Table 4.8. More Love Environment—Paired Samples Test**

Love Environment Paired Samples Test				
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Task Force—Congregation	3.002	22	.007

### **Analysis of the Love Environment Responses**

The comparison of pastors', task force members', and congregation members' responses revealed some interesting results. Pastors (88.3 percent), task force members (75 percent), and congregation members (62.5 percent) all believed the love environment strategy's influence strengthened their church's love environment. The responses of pastors (75 percent) compared to task force members (41.6 percent) and congregation members (15.6 percent) revealed a stronger desire to interact with unchurched parents at church events. Pastors (25 percent), task force members, and congregation members (43.7 percent) did not believe a system was in place before HCI to care for physical and spiritual needs, revealing a weakness in the love environment. The comparison of task



force members (45.8 percent) with pastors (41.6 percent) and congregation members (18.7 percent) showed that task force members had a stronger impression that visitor follow-up had improved. Pastors (63.6 percent) were more convinced than task force members (50 percent) and congregation members (37.5 percent) that small groups were focused on compassion projects.

### **Research Question #3**

To what degree have participating Missionary Church congregations developed a description of a disciplined person, which translated into a life transformation discipleship strategy?

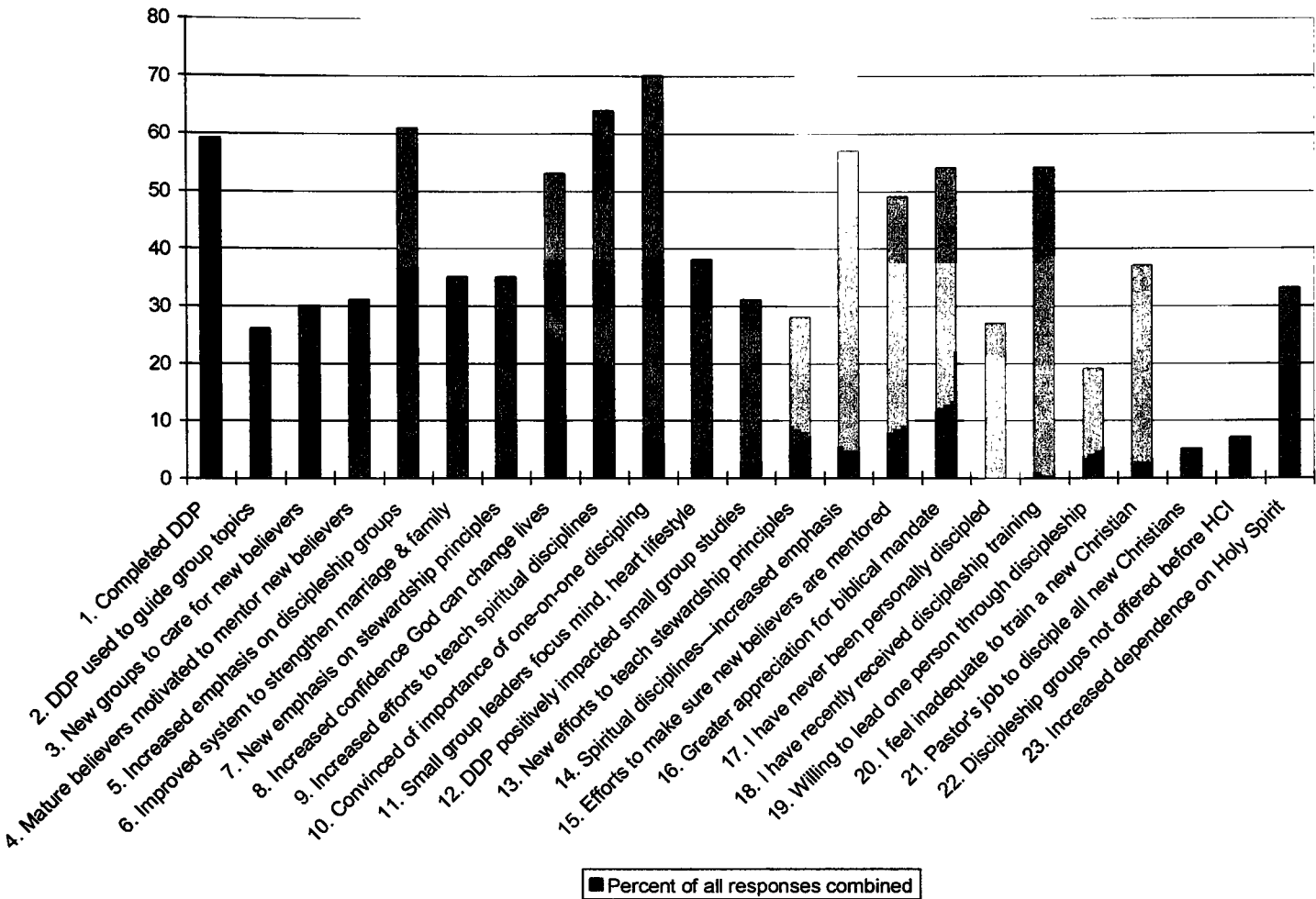
### **Report Data**

Part three of the HCI survey included questions about the HCI discipleship strategy. A key component of the discipleship strategy was the project of completing a DDP. Each church's task force was to develop a DDP by working together to create Scripture-based definition of what a person should be when he or she becomes mature in his or her faith. Many of the churches involved in HCI are still in the midst of this process. Some pastors reported their churches' DDP had been completed and others did not. Many churches had not progressed to the point of translating the concept into action.

Forty-eight respondents (70 percent ) believed HCI convinced them of the importance of one-on-one discipling. Forty-four respondents (64 percent) believe HCI motivated their churches to increase efforts to teach spiritual disciplines. Forty-two respondents (61 percent) believed HCI increased emphasis on discipleship groups. The data revealed only eighteen respondents (26 percent) thought HCI motivated the church to start small groups for new disciples due to lack of opportunities before HCI. Five

respondents (7 percent ) did not believe discipleship groups were offered before HCI.

Only thirteen respondents (19 percent) were willing to lead one person through discipleship. Forty-one respondents (59 percent) believed their churches' DDP had been completed. The completed DDP often did not lead to practical application. Respondents did not think the leaders in the church used the DDP as a guide for small group topics that encouraged mature believers to mentor new believers. Some respondents showed interest in leading at least one person through discipleship but mature believers lack motivation to mentor new believers. Church leaders lacked motivation to increase the emphasis on discipleship groups. Only one-third of the respondents thought the discipleship strategy motivated an increased dependence on the Holy Spirit (see Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3 Favorable responses to the discipleship strategy, all responses combined.**

The following responses reveal the percentage of positive responses to the discipleship.

**Table 4.9. Favorable Responses to the Discipleship Strategy (N=15, N=24; N=33)**

<b>Discipleship Strategy Comparison</b>	<b>Pastors %</b>	<b>Task Force %</b>	<b>Congregation %</b>
1. Completed DDP	54.5	62.5	57.5
2. DDP used to guide group topics	18.1	37.5	21.2
3. New groups to care for new believers	30.0	50.0	15.6
4. Mature believers motivated to mentor new believers	30.0	41.6	24.2
5. Increased emphasis on discipleship groups	70.0	58.3	59.3
6. Improved system to strengthen marriage & family	40.0	25.0	40.6
7. New emphasis on stewardship principles	40.0	45.8	25.0
8. Increased confidence God can change lives	50.0	62.5	46.8
9. Increased efforts to teach spiritual disciplines	70.0	75.0	53.1
10. Convinced of importance of one-on-one discipling	70.0	87.5	56.2
11. Small group leaders focus mind, heart, lifestyle	40.0	54.1	25.0
12. DDP positively impacted small group studies	20.0	50.0	21.2
13. New efforts to teach stewardship principles	40.0	41.6	15.1
14. Spiritual disciplines —increased emphasis	60.0	75.0	42.4
15. Efforts to make sure new believers are mentored	50.0	58.3	42.4
16. Greater appreciation for biblical mandate	70.0	54.1	37.5
17. I have never been personally disciplined	40.0	25.0	24.2
18. I have recently received discipleship training	40.0	58.3	39.3
19. Willing to lead one person through discipleship	50.0	62.5	29.8
20. I feel inadequate to train a new Christian	5.0	4.0	10.4
21. Pastor's job to disciple all new Christians	0.0	4.0	6.2
22. Discipleship groups not offered before HCI	4.0	0.0	15.1
23. Increased dependence on Holy Spirit	30.0	41.6	27.2

Pastors' responses to the discipleship portion of the survey compared to task force members' responses revealed no significant difference. Congregation members'

responses, however, compared to pastor's responses revealed .000 significance (two-tailed; see Table 4.10).

**Table 4.10. Discipleship Strategy—Paired Samples Test**

		<b>T</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Pair 1	Pastors—Task Force	-.790	22	.438
Pair 2	Pastors—Congregation	4.168	22	.000

Task force members were compared with congregation members for their responses to the survey regarding the discipleship strategy, revealing a statistical significance of .007 (two-tailed; see Table 4.11).

**Table 4.11. More Discipleship Strategy—Paired Samples Test**

		<b>T</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Pair 1	Task Force - Congregation	3.002	22	.007

### **Analysis of the Discipleship Strategy Responses**

Task force members (87.5 percent) were more confident than pastors (70 percent) and congregation members (56.2 percent) that HCI convinced them of the importance of one-on-one discipleship and more convinced (75 percent ) than pastors (60 percent) and congregation members (42.4 percent) that HCI increased efforts to teach spiritual disciplines. Pastors (70 percent) showed more confidence than task force members (58.3 percent) and congregation members (59.3 percent) that discipleship groups received

increased emphasis. Pastors (70 percent) expressed more confidence that HCI helped to establish a greater appreciation for the biblical discipleship mandate than task force members (54.1 percent) and congregation members (37.5 percent). Task force members (62.5 percent) expressed a stronger willingness than pastors (50 percent) and congregation members (29.8 percent) to lead one person through discipleship. Task force members (62.5 percent) and congregation members (57.5 percent) displayed a stronger inclination to believe the DDP had been completed than their pastors (54.5 percent). Task force members (62.5 percent) revealed more confidence than pastors (50 percent) and congregation members (40.6 percent) that HCI training increased confidence that God can change lives. Pastors (20 percent) and congregation members (21.2 percent) did not support the idea that the DDP positively impacted small group studies; however, task force members (50 percent) had a more positive response. All respondents expressed little support for the idea that new efforts were made to teach stewardship principles because of HCI. Task force members (58.3 percent) were more in agreement than pastors (50 percent) and congregation members (42.4 percent) that HCI brought about efforts to make sure new believers are mentored.

Most respondents believed they had been personally disciplined. Only task force members agreed they had recently received discipleship training. Likewise, task force members had the highest number of favorable responses indicating a willingness to lead one person through discipleship if they had the training to do so. A small number of respondents felt inadequate to train a new Christian or believed that all new Christians should be trained by the pastor. Very few respondents agreed that discipleship groups

were not offered before HCI. A small percentage of respondents agreed that HCI was the reason for an increased dependence on the Holy Spirit.

#### **Research Question #4**

To what degree have new healthy church practices begun to change participating Missionary Churches' culture, beliefs, and attitudes? Seven churches participated in semi-structured interviews designed to seek evidence of changes in culture, attitudes, and beliefs (see Appendix D).

#### **Norms: "The Way We Do Things around Here"**

Churches reported changes in traditional events to support the purpose established by the HCI love environment strategy. HCI helped change the focus of long-standing programs. Community outreach projects enhanced relationships in the community.

Churches learned the value of doing something for their community without expecting anything in return, including random acts of kindness and fund-raisers to give money to help someone or some need in the community. Traditional children's programs were changed to involve parents in teaching biblical principles to their children.

Churches used various tools, such as "40 Days of Purpose," to accomplish their goal of extending the love environment beyond the walls of the church building. Churches often reported that, while HCI training did not always give them a new ministry idea, it gave clarity of focus and increased intentionality of purpose. Some churches started new small groups while others, inspired by HCI training, became more intentional about using an existing small group ministry to focus on specific discipleship areas. Traditional practices were changed to encourage more connection between people. Some people, who had left a particular church because of bad relationships, noticed a change in

atmosphere inspired by the love environment strategy. Several churches used Missionary Church Keystone discipleship training as their tool for discipleship. People in the church have spontaneously started discipleship groups. HCI has proven to be a strategy that allows the flexibility of each church to choose the tools best suited to implement their own ministry goals.

## **Values**

Pastors and task force members used the word “intentional” to describe changes being made in the prayer focus of their churches. HCI inspired focus on the glory of God and his mission to the world. The HCI prayer base strategy helped church leaders discover their purpose and direction in ministry. The focus of extended prayer in board meetings helped provide more dependence on God’s leadership. People began to show love and care for others subsequent to implementation of HCI. Discipleship efforts became much more focused and intentional as a result of HCI.

Some churches reported increased attendance and assimilation of newcomers because of the improved love environment. Churches reported increased prayer, prayer as a first response to difficult situations and increased prayer for the lost among the positive changes attributed to the prayer-base strategy.

Although churches have done compassion projects in the past, HCI enhanced and gave focus to their outreach mission emphasis. Several churches developed their own unique ways of showing compassion to their communities such as a fund-raiser to provide a used handicapped equipped van for a little girl and to use toward the girl’s medical expenses. More than one church paid money toward gasoline purchases for people as an act of kindness.



The DDP was difficult for some to embrace. Some thought the process took too long and many things interrupted the process, such as holiday breaks or the loss of task force members who had to move away. Some task force groups lost interest because of pastoral transitions or HCI coaching that lacked enthusiasm.

People were inspired to begin spontaneous compassion ministries, extending the love environment beyond the walls of the church through outreach events such as an Angel Food program and soup for people to eat while picking up their food. Extended prayer has become a normal part of church board meetings. Disciples have begun passing on their biblical knowledge to others, individually or in small groups. Another church never completed the DDP because of a pastoral transition. The church, however, has continued to practice a number of things initiated because of HCI's influence. The DDP was used as an evaluation tool by at least two churches and a planning tool by another.

### **Peer Support**

Several churches responded positively about the team spirit of their task force group. Leadership retreats added to the effectiveness of the groups and provided a special time for evaluating programs, setting goals, and determining how to accomplish goals. Many of the task force members became more enthusiastic about their involvement in ministry. Pastors reported increased involvement by the people who participated in the task force groups and compassion teams. Some people became new leaders in the church such as serving as a deacon.

### **Commitment**

The words describing commitment to HCI during the interviews included concerted effort, continued involvement, spontaneous ministry starts, and dependence on

the direction of the Holy Spirit. Task force members were faithful to their regular HCI meetings and assignments.

The study produced some significant findings. A number of churches involved in the HCI process acknowledged that the discipleship strategy was still their greatest hurdle. The discipleship strategy was the last event in the initial training and in some cases was cut short or interrupted before the task force completed the process.

### **Findings of the Prayer Base Strategy**

Prayer for lost people was strongly emphasized in HCI training. People agreed they were greatly motivated to pray, but the motivation did not translate into substantial prayer for the lost. Survey participants agreed that new prayer initiatives have been launched in their churches because of the HCI prayer base strategy. The pastors and task force members who were part of HCI training were the most motivated to turn to prayer as their first response when addressing the needs of the church. Pastors were not strongly convinced that HCI training emphasized the Holy Spirit's direction. The task force members were more in tune with congregation members, who likewise believed HCI training emphasized the Holy Spirit.

The *t*-test on the prayer-base responses, comparing the perceptions of task force members with congregation members, rendered a .007 significance rating (two-tailed). In normal English, *significant* means important, while in statistics *significant* means probably true or not due to chance. A research finding may be true without being important. When statisticians say a result is *highly significant* they mean it is very probably true but not necessarily highly important. Any significance level less than .05 is significant, and the smaller the number, the stronger the significance. As a result, the .007

significance level indicates that the difference of opinion between pastors and congregations is very probably true. The reason for this difference needs further investigation through congregational interviews.

### **Findings of the Love Environment Strategy**

Pastors' responses compared to task force members' revealed no significant difference. Pastors' responses compared to congregation members' revealed a significant difference of .003 (two-tailed).

Task force members' responses compared to congregation members revealed a significant difference of .007 (two-tailed). Congregation member interviews should be conducted to discover the reasons for the difference.

### **Findings of the Discipleship Strategy**

The discipleship strategy received the most negative responses on HCI surveys. Some task force groups were still in the process of developing a DDP and others were in the middle of pastoral transition. Respondents were willing to support efforts to make disciples but putting that desire into action has not yet impacted their congregations. Many task force groups, still in the process of creating a DDP, needed additional time to develop all the means of accomplishing the goals of the DDP. The real lack of opportunity may be due to a lack of willingness to build relationships with nonchurched people, as indicated in the love environment evaluation. Pastors, task force members, and congregation members did not perceive that the discipleship strategy increased their dependence on the Holy Spirit. Pastors responded significantly different from congregation members to the discipleship strategy portion of the survey (.000 sig.) but were very much in sync with task force members. Task force members' responses

revealed significant difference with congregation members (.007 sig.). One can conclude that pastors and task force members had similar responses to HCI training and that congregation members still needed more exposure to HCI through the efforts of those already trained.

### **Findings of Changes in Culture, Beliefs, and Attitudes**

Churches showed a willingness to change when they valued the reasons for change and understood their God-given purpose. Churches learned the value of doing something for the community without expecting anything in return.

Pastors and task force members discovered that HCI brought clarity of focus and intentionality of purpose in relationship to the prayer and compassion ministries. Some task force members thought the discipleship sessions, including the development of the DDP, took too much time and interest was lost. Task force members found the Missionary Church Keystone discipleship training caused unintentional confusion concerning discipleship methods and their relationship to HCI. Other churches, however, decided to use Keystone discipleship methods as a discipleship strategy tool to enhance HCI.

The prayer-base and love-environment strategies had the most impact according to interview results. The DDP was difficult for some task force members to embrace because the initial stages were labor intensive. Interruptions caused by either schedule conflicts or pastoral transitions impeded progress, especially during the discipleship strategy. In some cases, churches were diverted to new programs and left the HCI strategy behind.

The interviews revealed encouraging stories of the spontaneous and compassionate actions of task force and church members. Congregation members showed relatively positive response overall, considering the limited amount of exposure to the HCI process at the time of this study.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

- The study had some significant findings

Purpose Positively Impacted: Churches were willing to change when they valued the reasons for change and understood their God-given purpose.

- Differing Perspectives Discovered: Pastors and task force members revealed differing perspectives regarding the reason for success or failure of certain elements of HCI.

- Conflicting Opinions Revealed: Pastors, task force members, and congregation members expressed different opinions regarding the church's response to HCI training.

- Significance of Responses Explained: The paired sample *t*-tests revealed significant levels of difference in the compared responses between pastors and congregation members as well as task force members and congregation members. The significance numbers do not reveal the meaning of the difference, but rather indicate the degree of likelihood that the results are true. The smaller numbers under .05 indicate the likelihood that the different responses are true.

Prayer Base: Task Force —Congregation (.007) sig.

Love Environment: Pastors—Congregation (.003) sig.

Task Force—Congregation (.007) sig.

Discipleship Strategy. Pastors—Congregation (.000) sig.

Task Force—Congregation (.007) sig.

These statistics show that differences between these groups are not just by chance, but do not necessarily indicate the importance of the finding.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Major Findings**

This project originated out of a twofold inquiry. The first inquiry was whether or not participating Missionary Church congregations were able to implement key elements of HCI. The second inquiry was whether HCI strategies changed culture, attitudes, or beliefs in the participating congregations. I modified original questions that Riemenschneider presented to task force members to see what elements of HCI strategy were already in place. I rewrote the questions to determine if any elements of HCI strategy were added or improved after learning the strategies. The purpose was to measure and compare responses of participating pastors, task force members and congregation members to see if key elements of the prayer base strategy, the love environment strategy, and the discipleship strategy were implemented by participating churches. I designed the interviews to reveal changes in culture, attitudes, and beliefs attributed to HCI strategies' influence, revealing what HCI strategies became part of the churches' way of life. The data from this study can be utilized to evaluate church health and provide insights helpful in planning future ministry. The data is specific to the Missionary Church and not intended to reflect any other church group.

In Chapter 1, the HCI discussion revealed deep changes in culture, attitudes, and beliefs, which come by connecting with God through prayer and the Word. Participating churches had at least two choices. The churches could implement key elements of HCI strategy, which is really Christ's strategy, as a to do list leading to short-term success, or they could connect with God, seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit to empower the

church, to allowing the strategy of Jesus to become part of their culture, beliefs, and attitudes. My hope is that churches will choose connecting with God through his Spirit, allowing him to be the source of a healthy church culture. Paul exhorts the people in Romans 12:1-2 with this admonition:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

No seminar or strategy can equip believers to carry out God's will apart from allowing God to transform them (Romans 12:2). Church health will emerge when God's people submit their lives to him as an act of worship and allow him to transform their way of thinking.

This data can be used by Missionary Church denominational and district officials to improve future efforts to educate and motivate pastors and church members to lead their churches to be healthy in God's way. Barna's assessment applies to this study, which includes a small sample, therefore the statistics do not apply to the entire range of churches (*Turnaround Churches* 17-18).

This study was designed in part to motivate participating churches to revisit and evaluate their progress in the HCI strategies. Missionary Churches must call upon the Holy Spirit to rekindle a desire to be healthy churches as a way of life, not merely another project. The Missionary Church denomination has plans to retool HCI into a discipleship multiplication strategy. A key element needed to make HCI strategy function better is the support and accountability of the E3 pastor's groups that already provide pastoral support in some of the Missionary Church districts, as discussed in Chapter 2.



### Participants' Profile

HCI involved pastors, task force members, and members of the participating churches. The congregations, with some exceptions, are mostly rural and small town cultures with family systems. Half of the participants are pastors and task force members. Most of the congregations were invited to participate because of declining or stagnated worship attendance, but the worship attendance decline did not necessarily mean a lack of conversion growth. The congregations experienced a variety of community demographics including growing, stagnated, or declining communities. Trained coaches led task force strategy sessions whenever possible. The churches without coaches were led by their own pastors, who received HCI training. In most cases, churches led by HCI coaches were more successful in staying on track than churches led by pastors because the coaches held the pastors accountable as well as other task force members. Survey participation was voluntary. Pastors and task force members faithfully involved themselves in the HCI process. The pastors and task force members may have responded faithfully because of a sincere desire to improve or, in some cases, because of the Hawthorne effect, which sometimes occurs when people respond well simply because they are chosen to participate ("Industrial Relations"). Congregational members' involvement depended on the approach chosen by the task force. Not all members of each congregation were aware that HCI strategy was behind new things occurring in their churches. Other task force groups chose to introduce strategies without referring to HCI by name. I chose to include congregational members in the survey to see if HCI strategies impacted the congregation. I gave congregational members the option to choose a *neither agree nor disagree* responses to unfamiliar questions. I interviewed pastors and task force members from

seven churches to discuss perceived changes of culture, attitudes, and beliefs motivated by HCI.

### **Purpose Positively Impacted**

*The participating Missionary Churches were willing to change when they valued the reasons for change and understood their God-given purpose.* Prayer is one of the key foundation stones in the HCI diagram (Figure 1.1, p. 21). The HCI survey sought to measure the degree to which the participating Missionary Church congregations implemented the HCI prayer base model.

In Chapter 2 is prayer is portrayed as essential to church growth (Crandall *Turnaround Strategies* 23; Hunter 43; Patton 52; Schwarz 26; Slaughter and Bird 156). The strongest responses received by the prayer strategy provide evidence respondents understood the priority of praying for lost people. The survey question about motivation to pray for lost people received very positive responses. In Chapter 2, *comeback churches* are identified as churches that “see the harvest” and pray “regularly and passionately” for God to provide harvesters (Stetzer and Dodsens 40). Praying for the lost is followed by obedient laborers who diligently prepare for the harvest. The disciple’s obedience to the Great Commission meshes with the purpose of Jesus’ plan to bring people into the kingdom of God where people’s lives are spiritually transformed discussed in Chapter 2 referring to Luke 9:1-2 as the essence of Jesus’ purpose (Scott and Scott 161). The Holy Spirit enables followers of Christ to be part of his plan to give new life that “produces fully committed Christian disciples” (Crandall, *Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 24). The church needs the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to see the urgency of the harvest (Stetzer and Dodsens 40).

Substantial numbers of respondents also reported the launch of new prayer initiatives because of the HCI prayer base strategy. Initiatives reported by churches during the interviews included challenging by task force members to motivate prayer for lost people, keeping track of those people until they ultimately received Christ, encouraging boards, worship teams, and small groups and spending extended time seeking the Lord before entering into business, practices, or studies. Coaches challenged churches to pray for God to provide a person to be a prayer coordinator and wait for God to lead an individual to express a desire for that kind of ministry rather than recruiting someone to fill in the roll. In several churches, God moved individuals' hearts to express a desire to serve in this capacity.

The evidence of change in the prayer atmosphere is supported by the respondents' increased motivation to pray for the lost and increased passion for prayer. The term "house of prayer" is connected with the statement Jesus made describing the purpose of his Father's house. Respondents were less sure their own churches could be called houses of prayer.

The pastors and task force members who were part of the HCI training process were the most motivated to turn to prayer as their first response when addressing the churches' needs. Pastors and task force members who model this attitude can encourage their congregation to respond the same way. The disciples were greatly impressed with Jesus' prayer life and watched him interact with his Father in heaven (McNeal 64). Jesus' connection with his father is evident from the beginning. In Chapter 2 the connection with the Father is traced from the Great Commission to Jesus' connection to his Father in John 17, including his goal of bringing glory to the Father by completing his

*Father's* plans (Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative"; Warren 19). Disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out Jesus' purpose through his Church, the body of Christ (Crandall, *Turnaround and Beyond a Hopeful Future* 24).

Respondents expressed their strongest opinion in support of their belief that HCI strengthened the love environment in their churches. Love for fellow Christians and the surrounding community are essential characteristics of healthy growing churches (Crandall, *Turnaround Strategies* 22-23; Hunter 49; Schwarz 36; Warren, 86).

Respondents gave their second strongest opinion when agreeing that HCI inspired a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for the love environment strategy. Jesus taught his disciples to love their neighbors. Wesley encouraged love for one another in his select bands (*Letters* 304). Respondents gave their third strongest response in supporting their belief that their church leaders modeled the "one another" passages of Scripture. The concept of loving and serving others is supported in Chapter 2 in the discussion of simple church (Rainer and Geiger 15) and by Wesley encouraging love for one another in his letter to Vincent Perronet referred to in Chapter 2 (*Letters* 304).

Respondents expressed their fourth strongest support agreeing that HCI inspired efforts to improve visitors' first impressions. Respondents' fifth strongest response is expressed in their agreement that HCI motivated small groups to do projects of compassion in their communities. Pastors in LaRue's study stated their third reason expressed indicating a need for a change was that their church had "no meaningful impact on community" (LaRue, "Back from the Brink").

Respondents' strongest response regarding the discipleship strategy was the belief that HCI convinced them of the importance of one-on-one discipling, which is really obedience to Christ's commands (Riemenschneider, "Healthy Church Initiative"). Respondents' second strongest response was the belief that HCI motivated their churches to teach spiritual disciplines with increased effort. Biehl supports the idea that discipleship focuses on "teaching spiritual disciplines" (30). Respondents' third strongest response believed HCI increased emphasis on discipleship groups. Both one-on-one and group discipleship are necessary. Many people think one-on-one discipleship is more effective than group discipleship; however, I believe both have worked well in my own experience. Churches were willing to change when they valued the reasons for change and understood their God-given purpose. LaRue's study, referred to in Chapter 2, reports that 95 percent of "turnaround churches had widespread congregational support soon after initiating their plans" ("Back from the Brink"). One of the words connected with norms is tradition. Churches reported changes such as restructuring communion to include a way for people to interact with each other by the transfer of forgiveness and choosing prayer as a first response to the challenges facing the church. Other respondents indicated that HCI inspired more concerted efforts to pray. Several respondents testified about the clarity, focus and intentionality instilled in ministry elements that had been taken for granted. One of the keys to growing healthy churches is to be intentional about making plans for every aspect of ministry (Stetzer and Dodsens 44).

Churches learned the value of doing something for the community without expecting anything in return. Values become a way of life. Kohl, as discussed in Chapter 2, reminds readers that the Great Commission addresses Jesus' values in order that

disciples may be Christlike (118). One cannot be Christlike and ignore the command to obey (Matt. 28:18-20).

Pastors and task force members discovered that HCI brought clarity of focus and intentionality relating to purpose in relationship to prayer and compassion ministries. Church growth experts agree that God's plan included helping disciples to know God's purpose for their lives through the intentional ministry shared from one believer to another (Stetzer and Dodsden 129; Warren, 104).

The prayer base and love environment strategies had the most impact according to interview results. The interviews revealed encouraging stories of the spontaneous and compassionate actions of task force and church members. Paul set the example, as mentioned in Chapter 2, by living among the people the Spirit led him to reach (1 Thess. 1:4-5). Love within the Christian community and the surrounding neighborhood is characteristic among healthy growing churches (Crandall, *Turnaround Strategies for the Small Church* 23; Hunter 49; Schwarz 36; Warren 86). Church health is expressed in the *one another* passages of Scripture, including Jesus' statement, "A new command I give you: Love one another" (John 13:34). Congregation members showed relatively positive response overall, considering the limited amount of exposure to the HCI process at the time of this study.

### **Differing Perspectives Discovered**

*Pastors and task force members revealed differing perspectives regarding the reason for success or failure of certain elements of HCI.* Pastors were not substantially convinced that HCI training emphasized the direction of the Holy Spirit. Task force members were more in tune with the congregational members who believed the Holy

Spirit was clearly emphasized. As Riemenschneider explained, HCI training teaches that the direction of the Holy Spirit comes through connecting with God through the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts, a concept illustrated in one of the HCI diagrams (see Figure 2.3, p. 23; Riemenschneider, Personal interview).

When comparing the opinions of pastors, task force members, and congregation members, the responses are disconnected in regard to some of the findings. Pastors were more willing to interact with unchurched parents at church events. Pastors were more convinced than the others that small groups were focused on compassion projects. Parishioners and pastors have different viewpoints. The results are consistent with LaRue's findings, given in Chapter 2, stating that pastors thought "low morale, apathy, or spiritual depression" signaled need for change while parishioners had a different opinion ("Back from the Brink, Leadership"). Task force members, however, were more convinced than pastors and congregation members that visitor follow-up had improved.

Pastors, task force members, and congregation members did not believe a system was in place before HCI to care for physical and spiritual needs, revealing a weakness in the love environment.

Pastors, because of their daily focus on ministry, are often more enthusiastic about the spiritual growth of others. Task force members (75 percent) in the survey revealed stronger opinions than pastors (70 percent) and congregation members (53 percent) concerning efforts to teach spiritual disciplines. Task force members (50 percent) displayed a commendable willingness to lead one person through discipleship. Task force members (62.5 percent) were also the most assured that HCI had increased their confidence that God can change lives.

HCI is a strategy that guides the programs necessary to produce mature disciples and church leaders must revisit the strategies often because the foundation blocks of prayer and the love environment should always be kept strong. Pastors are the key to keep the strategy and the vision before the people. Pastors (70 percent) were more convinced than task force members (58.3 percent) and congregation members (59.3 percent) that discipleship groups were emphasized more than before HCI emphasis. Task force members (62.5 percent) were more convinced than pastors (50 percent) and congregation members (40.6 percent) that HCI training increased confidence that God can change lives.

### **Conflicting Opinions Revealed**

*Pastors, task force members, and congregation members expressed different opinions regarding the churches' response to HCI training.* Only 19 percent of all respondents were willing to lead one person through discipleship. The mentor of a disciple must turn belief into action, investing time in the personal attention, teaching, caring, and prayer necessary to bring a person to full maturity (Eims 45-46).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, LaRue's findings revealed "pastors and parishioners have different views of the cause" of the problems leading to church decline ("Back from the Brink, Leadership). Pastors' and congregation members' differing views emerged in the discipleship strategy survey, shedding more light on the findings in the overall response.

Task force members (87.5 percent) were more confident than pastors (70 percent) and congregation members (56.2 percent) that HCI convinced them of the importance of one-on-one discipleship; however, all three groups displayed a common positive focus.



Leaders, unified in purpose, can set the example with their commitment to the discipleship process. The process begins with leaders mentoring others who will, in turn, become mentors of new disciples. Leroy Eims, in contrast to Wesley or Coleman, expresses the Navigators' approach, discouraging "the mass production mindset" of producing disciples in favor of one-on-one discipleship because mass produced disciples rarely go out to disciple another person (45).

The time pastors and coaches spent with task force members teaching the HCI principles produced a positive result. Jesus, as discussed in Chapter 2, placed trust in the disciples, providing a good example for leaders today, giving them an opportunity to serve.

Task force members thought the DDP was complete and pastors did not. People in a program-oriented culture expect to finish one program and move on to another. Some task force members believed the discipleship sessions, including the development of the DDP, took too much time; therefore, interest was lost. Task force groups experienced difficulty in staying focused when developing the DDP due to busy schedules. Church leaders tend to create complicated programs to solve problems, which actually create difficulties for people seeking a simple lifestyle. The DDP was difficult for some task force members to embrace because the initial stages were labor intensive. Pastors and coaches may want to explore ways to streamline the process to fit busy lifestyles.

Task force members found the Missionary Church Keystone discipleship training caused unintentional confusion concerning discipleship methods and the relationship to HCI. Sometimes leaders unintentionally create perception problems by moving from one project to another without explaining the connection between the strategy and the tools to

carry out the strategy. Disciples are not always focused on the strategy. Jesus, who spent his time mentoring “twelve full time students [disciples],” also attempted to mentor disciples “who were just auditing the course” (Kohl 116). Other churches, however, were motivated to use Keystone discipleship methods as a discipleship strategy tool to enhance HCI. These churches understood HCI as a strategy, not a program.

The discipleship strategy is far beyond making converts (Eims 41; Coleman 65). Jesus’ difficult strategy Coleman describes as “The Way of the Cross” (64). Disciples struggled when Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Potential disciples heard what Jesus said and walked away.

### **Significance of Responses Explained**

*The paired samples t-tests revealed significant levels of difference in the compared responses between pastors and congregation members. The significance numbers do not reveal the meaning of the difference, but indicate the degree of likelihood that the results are true.* The low significance numbers in the *t*-tests reveal a difference between the opinions of Pastors and the congregation and between task force members and the congregation that call for further investigation. The sample results are not just coincidences. This difference could be enlightened by interviews of congregation members in further studies. Certainly one could conclude that congregation members’ opinions could be enhanced by increased involvement in the HCI process. Involvement ultimately yields commitment. The differing opinions do not provide evidence for an indictment against the participants but rather provide an incentive to pass on the positive aspects of HCI to the entire congregation. The assimilation of the HCI strategies into the

life of the congregation had not yet occurred at the time of this study, but I believe any congregation member would be committed with increased involvement in the process. Mallory's experiences mentioned in Chapter 2 reveal the significance of lay involvement in ministry and the idea that an *equipping ministry system* should be a high priority for the leaders of the church (44).

### **Implications of the Findings**

This study provides another step in the process of building upon the foundation of church health. The Healthy Church Initiative is a practical, biblically based strategy that gives churches a compass to follow. Pastors and church leaders who are intentional following Jesus with the help of HCI strategy will see the fruit of their labors. The prayer base and the love environment strategies are foundation blocks built on the Word of God to support the discipleship strategy. These strategies must be revisited until they become part of the churches' culture, attitudes, and beliefs. These three strategies are just the beginning, the first of ten strategies based on God's Word. Pastors and task force members benefit from the help of a coach when possible. Pastors need the accountability of E3 pastors' groups to keep on track. Pastors need to seek ways to understand the different perceptions of the congregation, communicate with them about the strategy, and get them involved in the process of developing the strategy. Pastors and task force groups should carefully choose the tools that best fit their local situation and modify, when necessary, those tools and ideas gleaned from other ministries. The difficult work on the DDP produces the greatest return because lay leaders are involved in the ministry planning and evaluation. The *t*-tests reveal that the congregation still needs time for engagement to facilitate *buy in* by the entire congregation.

### Limitations of the Study

Riemenschneider acknowledges that the really successful churches were the most desperate (interview). Desperation is not something that can be taught; it simply exists. The method used to distribute the survey placed the responsibility on the pastor and those receiving the surveys to respond voluntarily. Pastors sometimes chose not to hand the survey to certain people because they anticipate a lack of knowledge by potential respondents. The survey could be administered to the entire congregation during a worship service.

Future studies would benefit by keeping the results of the original survey given by the designer of HCI training so the data could be compared *before* and *after*. The respondents were too few in number to provide adequate data to compare the responses of individual churches instead of comparing pastors with task force members and church members. The post-survey could be better managed by doing an online survey instead of one sent by mail. Time management would improve greatly by allowing the online survey to tabulate the results. The timing of the survey should completely avoid Thanksgiving through New Year's Day. The sample of this survey was small because only twenty-eight churches participated in the training and only 46 percent responded. Two additional churches only participated in the interviews, bringing the total responses to 53 percent. A survey comparing churches not participating in HCI training with those participating in the training would be another interesting approach. The original survey designed by Riemenschneider could be administered to raise the awareness of any church's health needs. The researcher-designed survey modified Riemenschneider's design to measure implementation of the HCI strategies, and the interview was designed

to measure culture, attitudes and behaviors. The research for this study was case specific and not intended to be used in another setting.

### Unexpected Observations

I was not prepared for the lack of response regarding the HCI surveys. I believed the participants could provide helpful insight for improving the process of HCI training. I was pleasantly surprised at the insights provided by the interviews. Some respondents believed the process of completing a DDP took too much time.

The order of the steps to produce disciples differs somewhat from the order of events taught by John Wesley. In Chapter 2, Wesley was referred to as a major influence on the heritage of the Missionary Church. Wesley's view of *prevenient* grace differed from HCI's changed heart, changed minds, and changed lifestyle. Wesley would have reversed the order to be changed heart, changed minds, and changed lifestyle. The HCI strategy emphasized the words of Paul saying, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2). Leo G. Cox proposed that God's grace in Wesley's theology was given to all people before salvation (143). In Wesley's era, the word *prevenient* meant *going before* (Cox 143). Wesley's concept began with his observations of people:

The more I converse with this people, the more I am amazed. That God hath wrought a great work among them, is manifest; and yet the main of them, believers and unbelievers, are not able to give a rational account of the plainest principles of religion. It is plain, God begins his work at the heart; then "the inspiration of the Highest giveth understanding" (*Letters*).

The providential grace preceding salvation leads to the saving grace leading redemption. Wesley believed this particular grace makes it possible for unsaved people to live

reasonably moral lives (Cox 143). The idea of prevenient grace fits well with HCI's mandate to pray for lost people.

### **Recommendations**

The relationship between pastoral style and church health would make an interesting study. The demographics revealed that pastoral style was not directly related to the conversion growth rate. Most of the churches in this study had a high percentage of Caucasian members. I would like to see the results in a number of multicultural settings. Other settings missing from this study were the large metropolitan cities and the Hispanic Missionary Church congregations.

I would like to modify the survey using the HCI principles that apply to any church and administer the same survey to all Missionary Churches one or two years apart to measure progress. One research reflection team member suggested that the survey could benefit by having more questions focusing on results. If churches involved more participants, a study comparing individual churches would be welcome.

### **Postscript**

I have participated in every level of HCI training, serving as pastor and coach. I have led a congregation through the process and the process continues. I had the privilege of coaching a sister church that did very well with the strategy because of a dedicated pastor and task force. This project has kept me on track in my own ministry and helped me grow significantly in the area of personal discipline. I have been able to work with a wonderful research reflection team and found great support from both national and district Missionary Church leaders. The Healthy Church Initiative helped our local congregation to look beyond its walls to the community.

The research process challenged my thinking and engaged my heart and mind with the strategy of Jesus and the writings of influential authors. I gained a stronger appreciation for discipline and value of research.

This study has encouraged me to stay focused on the HCI strategy in my own ministry and has given me a ministry plan and an evaluation tool. I have reaped the rewards of working with a great dissertation reflection team and have had the support of the great people of Grace Community Missionary Church.

My life verse is Philippians 1:20-21: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." I pray for the Missionary Church that future efforts to strengthen churches and make disciples will bring glory to God. I received one of the greatest rewards from this study through being reminded that no matter how well church leaders are trained, without the connection to God through the Holy Spirit, all efforts fall short of the glory of God.

## APPENDIX A

### Description of a Discipled Person

#### Grace Community Missionary Church

<b>Biblical Standard</b>	<b>Discipleship Process</b>	<b>Demonstrated Practice</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Evaluate and Re-tool</b>
Worship (corporate) Extravagant honor, glory and devotion “Love your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” Mark 12:30	Preaching	Attends services	Habits	Sermon series on personal devotions and worship (Winter/Spring 2008)	Ongoing or annual review by church board (August 2008)
	Teaching	Brings glory to God	Environment		
	Modeling by the church body	Has ongoing ministry with growth	Home		
	Confessing	Shares faith	Influence	Worship team study on worship (monthly)	Do current church programs, bring people into contact with God?
	Praising		Flesh		
	Praying		Devil	Sermon series “What it means to be a disciple.” Fall 2008	Decide to continue or discontinue programs
	One-to-one mentoring	Personal devotions			
	Counseling	Bible study, prayer			
	Encouraging	Brings glory to God through life accountability			

The congregation will know these statements because we will demonstrate them and model them, preach them, teach them, and expect them from our leadership.



## More Grace Community Missionary Church, Bad Axe, MI

### Description of a Discipled Person

<b>Biblical Standard</b>	<b>Discipleship Process</b>	<b>Demonstrated Practice</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Evaluate and Re-tool</b>
Submit to the Holy Spirit  “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.” 1 Thess. 4:3a	Teaching	Submission	World	Sermon series “What it means to be a disciple.” (Fall 2008)	Church board review (August 2008)
	Preaching	Right living	Flesh		
	Pray for	Christ centered	Devil		
	Hold accountable (discipline).	“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.” Gal. 5:22-23			
	Mentoring				
	Counseling				
Love of neighbor  “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ you are doing right.” Jas. 2:8	Teaching	Concern for others		Fellowship	Church board review
	Preaching			Opportunities (many)	
	Fellowship	Participating in outreach			
	Church and community	Uses spiritual gifts for service		Sermon series “What it means to be a disciple.”	
	Projects	Practices personal devotions			
	Encouragement				
	One to one mentoring	Bible study, prayer			
	Counseling	Brings glory to God through accountability			
	Encouraging				

The congregation will know these statements because we will demonstrate them and model them, preach them, teach them, and expect them from our leadership.

## More Grace Community Missionary Church, Bad Axe, MI

### Description of a Discipled Person

Biblical Standard	Discipleship Process	Demonstrated Practice	Barriers	Actions	Evaluate and Re-tool
Stewardship	Teaching	Freely gives of time, talent, and treasures	Personal desires	Sermon series “What it means to be a disciple” (Fall 2008)	Church board review August 2008
	Preaching		Business		
	Praying for		Distractions		
	Holding accountable (discipline)		Flesh		
	Mentoring				
	Counseling				
Disciple Making  “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” 1 Thess. 2:8	Teaching	Faithfulness to calling (spiritual gifts)	Fear	Sermon series “What it means to be a disciple”	Church board review August 2008
	Preaching		Lack of knowledge		
	Mentoring	Seeking opportunities for service	Disobedience		
	Giving opportunity for service	Strong desire to learn and serve	Lack of mentoring		
	Encouraging		Cost		
			Full commitment to seeing others grow		

The congregation will know these statements because we will demonstrate them and model them, preach them, teach them and expect them from our leadership.

## APPENDIX B

### Healthy Church Initiative Demographics Questionnaire

This survey should be completed by the senior pastor unless there is not a pastor currently serving the church.

Check one of the following that best describes your role:

Pastor \_\_\_\_ Deacon or Elder \_\_\_\_ (if no pastor available).

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_ (kept confidential).

#### General Questions:

1. How many years has our church been in existence? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the size of the combined population of the community(ies) within a 7-mile radius? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In which type of setting is the church located? Check one: (rural \_\_\_\_, small town \_\_\_\_, small city \_\_\_\_, large city \_\_\_\_)

4. What is the ethnic mix of your congregation?

Percent white \_\_\_\_, percent non-white \_\_\_\_

5. Describe the primary style of your worship service(s).

**Please write the day of the week and service times in columns one and two, then check one of the four style columns for each worship service opposite the day and time. If you only have one service, use the first row only.**

Day	Time	Traditional	Blended	Contemporary	Other
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

**For the next two questions, please indicate how true each statement was for you and/or your congregation, *at the time you began the HCI process*, by circling the number that most closely corresponds to your answer.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Our church was motivated for change. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Our church has had significant past exposure to church health material.

Stakeholders:

**Pastor** 1 2 3 4 5

**Key Leaders** 1 2 3 4 5

**Congregation** 1 2 3 4 5

10. Five-year average worship attendance trend.

2003 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Five-year conversion growth rate

2003 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

12. Demographic population trends

Town or City: growing\_\_\_\_shrinking\_\_\_\_stable\_\_\_\_static\_\_\_\_

Your specific neighborhood: growing\_\_\_\_shrinking\_\_\_\_stable\_\_\_\_static\_\_\_\_

Economy: weak\_\_\_\_, moderate\_\_\_\_, strong\_\_\_\_

13. Our church participated in HCI during these years \_\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_\_.

14. The current senior pastor has been here since (year)\_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX C

### The Healthy Church Initiative Survey

This survey is for pastors, task force members and selected members of the congregation. Please choose the response *best representing* your knowledge and experience of the Healthy Church Initiative in regard to the prayer base, love environment and discipleship strategies.

Check one of the following that best describes your role:

Pastor\_\_\_ Task force member\_\_\_ Congregation member\_\_\_

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

#### THE PRAYER BASE

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>1. The leaders and workers in our church have enlisted a personal prayer team as a result of Healthy Church Initiative (HCI).</b> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>2. Life Transformation groups in the church have demonstrated consistency in praying for lost people.</b>                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>3. New prayer initiatives have been implemented in our church since HCI.</b>  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>4. Small groups on the subject of prayer have been offered by our church since participating in HCI.</b>                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>5. The prayer atmosphere has changed in our board and committee meetings since HCI.</b>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>6. New ministries initiated by our church have helped us to become a “House of Prayer” since participating in HCI.</b>            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>7. Our congregation has a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for the prayer base strategy.</b>                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <b>8. Our congregation has an increased confidence that God can transform lives through the prayer base strategy.</b>                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>	
<b>9. I have found personal help through new prayer initiatives in our church since the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>10. My prayer life has expanded beyond simply listing prayer requests since the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>11. I have new motivation to pray for lost friends and relatives since the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>12. My passion for prayer has increased because of the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>13. Prayer requests sent to me through e-mail, bulletin or other means have noticeably increased because of the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>14. Prayer has become my first response, more frequently, as a result of the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5
<b>15. Holy Spirit direction was clearly emphasized as an integral part of the prayer base strategy.</b>					
		1	2	3	4 5

## THE LOVE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>	
<b>1. The love environment strategy has strengthened the love environment in our church.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2. Our church had a system in place to make sure each person is cared for and their physical and spiritual needs met before the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3. Projects of compassion have been planned by small groups in our church since participating in the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4. Small groups focusing on connecting with community were initiated for the first time by our church because of participating in HCI.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. Church leaders have made new efforts to model the “one another” passages of Scripture because of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6. Improvements have been made to create a better “first impression” for visitors as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. Attendance in worship services has been impacted by the improvement in the love environment at worship services since the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8. Small group ministry has a new impact on the life of our church since the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. Our visitor follow-up procedure has improved because of the love environment strategy</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10. Our church’s efforts to involve newcomers in the life of the church has improved as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11. Our church had a greeter system in place and functioning before the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>	
<b>12. Our church had events functioning and in place to help people get to know and love one another before the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>13. Our congregation has a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>14. Our congregation has an increased confidence that God can transform lives through the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>15. Our church has increased the number of compassion projects as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>16. I have an increased desire to attend events when our church family interacts with the unchurched parents of our children’s ministry as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>17. I have an increased motivation to fellowship with outsiders as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18. I have an increased appreciation for small groups as a result of the love environment strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>19. I have found a new joy in meeting new people in a small group setting because of the love environment setting.</b>	1	2	3	4	5



<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>
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## THE DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

<b>1. Our church has completed a description of a disciplined person (DDP) and made it available to the congregation.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2. Our life transformation groups use the DDP as a guide for choosing topics.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3. Our church needed a system in place to take care of new believers before the Discipleship Strategy and has now offered these small groups as a result of the Discipleship Strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4. Mature believers in our church were motivated to mentor new believers because of the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. Our church has an increased emphasis on providing a foundations class or Christianity 101 to teach the basics for living out the Christian faith.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6. Our church has improved its system to strengthen the marriages and families of those in our church because the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. Our church began a new emphasis on stewardship principles as a result of the Discipleship Strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8. Our congregation has an increased confidence that God can transform lives through the Discipleship Strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. Our church has increased efforts to help our people learn about and practice spiritual disciplines as a result of the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10. The discipleship strategy has convinced me of the importance of discipling another person by one-on-one mentoring.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11. The discipleship strategy has trained our transformation group leaders to make sure they are focusing on mind, heart and lifestyle change.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>	
<b>12. Creating a description of a disciplined person has positively impacted the effectiveness of our small group studies.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>13. New efforts to teach stewardship principles have been planned because of the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>14. Spiritual disciplines (how to care personally for your spiritual life) have an increased emphasis in our church (e.g., prayer, devotions, meditation) as a result of the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>15. There are new efforts to make sure people coming to faith in Christ are mentored either individually or in small groups.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>16. Our congregation has a greater appreciation for the biblical mandate for the Discipleship Strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>17. I have never personally been disciplined.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18. I have recently received new training about discipleship.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>19. I would be willing to lead one other person through discipleship training if I knew how.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>20. I feel inadequate to train a new Christian.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>21. The pastor's job is to disciple all new Christians.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>22. Our church did not offer small discipleship groups until we participated in the discipleship strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>23. Our church has shown evidence of an increased dependence on Holy Spirit direction as a result of the Discipleship Strategy.</b>	1	2	3	4	5

## Pastoral Leadership Style Survey

How would you characterize the senior pastor's leadership style?

**You may have observed more than one leadership style, but please check only one choice in the right-hand box next to the most prevalent characteristic.**

LEADERSHIP STYLE	DEFINITION	Check <u>only one</u> choice for the most prevalent characteristic
Visionary	Enthusiastic, clear picture of future possibilities.	
Directional	God-given ability to choose the right path at critical time.	
Strategic	God-given ability to take exciting vision and break down into sequential, achievable steps.	
Managing	Ability to organize people, processes, and resources to achieve a mission.	
Motivational	God-given ability to get teammates fired up.	
Shepherding	Builds a team slowly, loves team members deeply, listens patiently and prays for them diligently.	
Team building	Realizes need for a team of leaders to accomplish the vision.	
Entrepreneurial	May possess any of the other leadership styles, but this person functions best in start-up mode.	
Reengineering	Loves to start new endeavors, best in turn-around environments.	
Bridge building	Makes important contributions to large organizations—e.g. para-church, denominations, and educational institutions.	

Source: Hybels 139-56.

## APPENDIX D

### Healthy Church Initiative Interview Questions on Culture, Belief and Attitude Changes

**Norms** “The way we do things around here.”

How has HCI impacted “The way we do things around here?”

Influence:

On established church traditions?

On relationships with your community?

On relationships within the church?

On disciple-making ministry?

Other noticeable impacts?

**Values** “What really matters to us.”

How has HCI impacted “what really matters to us?”

How has the prayer base impacted the church?

In our attitudes toward prayer?

In the content of our prayer?

In our concern for lost people?

In our efforts to keep the congregation informed about prayer needs?

How has the love environment impacted our church?

In our care and concern for each other?

In the purpose of our fellowships?

In our involvement in compassion projects?

In random acts of kindness?

How has the discipleship strategy impacted our church?

In the process of creating a Description of a Discipled Person?

In our involvement in the lives of new believers?

In the way we plan our ministry?

**Peer support** “How those involved buy in and support the strategy.”

Task force:

What qualities do you see in your fellow task force members?

In the level of team spirit?

In carrying out assignments decided by the task force?

Typical attenders:

In the level of trust in the church?

In the level of participation in prayer? In compassion projects? In discipleship groups?

**Commitment** “Serious about faith, purpose, and involvement.”

How has the level of commitment changed since implementing HCI principles and, if it has changed, how much of the change do you attribute to HCI?

Commitment depth among:

Various groups in the church?

Key leaders? Discipleship group leaders? Prayer leaders?

Evidence or signs of change in commitment?

Role of the task force in increasing commitment level?

**Community** “knowing and appreciating one another.”

How has the role of the love environment strategy impacted the church?

In relationships among leaders? In relationships among congregation

members? In relationships with the community around the church?

In times of crisis? In times of financial need? In times of emotional need?

**Shared Vision** “willingness to embrace common goals and strategies.”

Task force:

How has HCI strategy influenced your goals and strategies for church health?

Probes:

In the area of prayer? In the purpose of fellowship gatherings?

In the manner of developing disciples?

Has HCI helped in seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit?

**Positive Outlook** “sense of hope and prospects for the future.”

What has been the attitude toward needed changes?

In the belief in the possibility of constructive change?

In the acceptance of changes suggested by the task force?

In enthusiasm for community outreach?

In attitudes toward being a part of the church family?

## APPENDIX E

### Letter to Pastors from Dr. William Hossler



3811 Vanguard Drive  
PO Box 9127, Fort Wayne IN 46899-9127  
Phone: (260) 747-2027; Fax: (260) 747-5331  
[www.mcusa.org](http://www.mcusa.org)

November 17, 2008

Dear Pastor,

Thank you for your interest in promoting church health by participating in the Healthy Church Initiative in recent years.

I am writing to encourage your participation in an evaluation of the Healthy Church Initiative. Larry Salsburey, Doctor of Ministry candidate at Asbury Seminary, is a Missionary Church pastor and member of the Michigan District church health team. He is writing a dissertation entitled "The Effect of the Healthy Church Initiative on Participating Congregations of the Missionary Church."

Your cooperation will provide the information essential to completion of the research. We will share the highlights of the research with the churches participating in the Healthy Church Initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William G. Hossler".

Dr. William Hossler, President  
Missionary Church Inc.

## APPENDIX F

### Letter to Pastors



Grace Community  
Missionary Church  
225 E. Woodworth  
Bad Axe, MI 48413

***Rev. Larry Salsburey—Pastor***

Pastor John Rzendzian—Youth and Worship  
Ph. 989-269-7606 Church

November 17, 2008

Dear Pastor,

I would like to thank you in advance for helping with this survey of the Healthy Church Initiative. There are two surveys included in this packet. I would appreciate it if you would fill out the Healthy Church Initiative Demographics Questionnaire. Next the Healthy Church Initiative and Pastoral Leadership Style Surveys should be filled out by yourself, the HCI Task Force members, and up to 10 randomly selected members of the congregation or volunteers who are not task force members. If you cannot find ten willing participants, send in as many as you can.

Included in this packet you should find in addition to this letter:

One letter from Dr. William Hossler.

One Healthy Church Initiative Demographics Questionnaire.

One postcard to return if you would like to be considered to participate in a follow-up interview, which will be a speaker phone call involving you and your task force gathered for discussion at a time I will set with you by appointment. I would like to record the session for my own notes only.

20 Healthy Church Initiative and Pastor Leadership Style surveys.

One participant instruction letter.

One self-addressed, stamped large manila envelope to return the completed surveys by December 15, 2008.

The large survey should be possible to complete in 15-20 minutes. The demographics survey is short, but may take some time to get the statistics. Feel free to estimate the population in a 7 mile radius and you should be able to find some

**statistics in District Conference journals or local church records. If for some reason you cannot find an answer, leave that answer blank and return the survey anyway. Please honor the privacy of the individual surveys that will be returned to you.**

**In His Service,**

**Larry Salsburey  
Pastor**



## APPENDIX G

### HCI Survey Instruction Letter

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary and a Missionary Church pastor. I am conducting research entitled, "The Effect of the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) on Participating Congregations of the Missionary Church." I would like to survey the HCI task force members and up to ten people from each participating congregation. If you are not an HCI task force member, you have been randomly selected from your church as one invited to assist in the study.

The results of the survey will not provide information specific to any single church. I want to assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. I want to protect your relationships with others in your church so I will not ask for your name on the survey. The data will be collected using a code and all of the surveys will be collated to give a blended view rather than identify any one person.

I believe church health is a central element of any church and I believe findings from this survey will allow me to provide information to the Missionary Church that will help improve efforts to promote church health and discipleship. My hope is that our entire denomination will be helped when you and others like you have taken time to participate. Once the survey research is completed, I will destroy the individual surveys and keep the anonymous data electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved.

Please know that you can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions on the survey. I realize your participation is entirely voluntary and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is 818-441-4851 and my e-mail is [larry@salsburey.com](mailto:larry@salsburey.com).

If you are willing to assist me in this study, please return your anonymous survey by saving the file and returning it as an e-mail attachment. By participating in this study you permit us to blend your responses into the research findings. No denominational or district official will see your personal surveys. Only the blended statistics will be made available and no specific church name will be mentioned. If you received this by e-mail, see instructions in bold face on next page. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Larry Salsburey

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